

THE
THIRTEENTH
MAN

MRS. COULSON KERNAHAN

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The Thirteenth Man

By

MRS. COULSON KERNAHAN

Author of

"Under Seal of the Confessional," "The Gate of Sinners,"

"The Fraud," "Trewinnot of Guy's,"

"An Artist's Model," etc., etc.



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THE THIRTEENTH MAN

To

MISS M BETHAM-EDWARDS

Whom all the world admires as poet, novelist and
essayist, and all who know her personally love
and reverence as true woman and dear friend.

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THE THIRTEENTH MAN

CHAPTER I

WHICH INTRODUCES A YOUNG AUTHOR

A STRANGE, mournful song broke the stillness of a hot July afternoon, and caused two pedestrians to come to a halt in a lane on which dust lay thick.

On either side were high banks, surmounted by unclipped hedges.

One of the pedestrians, a young and athletic man, had climbed the bank nearer to him in a second, and was peering through a gap in the hedge, where nothing met his gaze but miles of smiling country, dotted by farms at long intervals, a bungalow covered with rambler roses, and a white house on the border of a wood.

"Can you see anybody, sir?" asked the man in the lane, who was dressed as a farmer.

The weird singing rose again.

"I should take it for a sea-gull, sir," said the puzzled farmer, "except that we are a good five miles from the sea here."

The young man sprang back into the lane, causing a cloud of white dust to rise. His clean-shaven face had a troubled expression.

"It sounded to me like a woman chanting a dirge."

"I expect it is some rascal of a boy amusing himself," said the farmer reassuringly. "A most unholy noise to make, I call it."

He looked uneasily at his companion. If Mr. Barrimore were a nervous sort of man he might not take the bungalow, and the farmer wanted to let it.

The bungalow looked lovely now, covered by roses, but it was undeniably lonely at any time, and in winter desolate enough. He followed up his remark:

"If you come to live in the country, Mr. Barrimore, you will have to get used to queer noises. The owls at night hoot, and the way they *breathe* would almost make you believe it was a human being. But you soon get to take no heed to country sounds. If book-writing is your trade, you couldn't find a better place to carry it on in than my bungalow. Wonderfully pretty it looks now, with the roses out. We shall be coming to it at the turn of the road."

"I saw it just now, Mr. Pickett, from the top of the bank," said Barrimore. "It looked charming. But I can't get that sad singing out of my head. It was to me a heart-break set to music. But"—(Barrimore smiled, and for the first time his companion noted that the young man was good-looking)—"but authors are imaginative, and I am willing to accept your view of the case. You seem to think I am nervous!" (He smiled again.) "But I have never had that character. Here we are!"

On the right stood the big red-tiled bungalow, with its white verandah and its wealth of red rambler roses.

Pickett jingled a bunch of keys as he approached the padlocked gate.

"You see, sir, that the garden is in good order,"

he remarked, as he unfastened the gate. "And the water in the well is beautiful, and cold as can be, even this weather. The painter-chap who built it spared no expense, and there's flooring put down in yonder clear space for a stable, if you should like me to put one up, which I will do, if you take the bungalow for three years."

"I think I can promise to do that if I like the place," said Barrimore rather absently. "One can always shut it up, you know."

Pickett stared. He could not understand the wastefulness suggested by the idea of paying rent and shutting up the place. However, it was all right so far as he personally was concerned, and this well-dressed young man, who carried a gold cigar-case, had probably a big banking account.

The interior of the bungalow turned out to be ideal. There were six rooms in all—two reception-rooms, three bedrooms and a kitchen. The scheme of decoration was charming, and had evidently been carefully thought out by the "painter-chap" Pickett had referred to.

Above all, there was a splendid bathroom.

This last item decided Barrimore to take the bungalow. To him who revelled in a cold morning tub it was of no consequence that there was no means of heating the bath.

"You may start on the stable as soon as you like," he said to the delighted farmer. "I shall come in with a manservant next week. I suppose I can put up a saddle-horse at your farm till the stable is ready? I shall need to ride into Hastings frequently at first."

"Oh, certainly, sir. I have plenty of stable room," responded Pickett.

While the farmer was locking the door, Barrimore,

took out a penknife and cut some roses to take back for his mother, who loved little attentions.

"Poor old mummy!" he said to himself. "She is a bit sore about my wanting to be away from home, but I *can't* stand Uncle Robert's quotations!"

Barrimore had walked the whole five miles from Hastings to Pickett's Farm at Gissing, having seen an advertisement of the bungalow, and he was going to walk the whole distance back, to get rid of the irritability caused by Uncle Robert's quotations.

Uncle Robert was his mother's brother, and had been christened Robert because his surname was Burns, and he had evidently conceived the idea that the mantle of the poet after whom he was named had descended upon him. He read incessantly, and remembered all he read. It was not his fault if everyone else did not remember it also. He also wrote verse.

Uncle Robert had made his home with his sister since she had been a widow, and Philip Barrimore, who had taken up literature as a career, found at last that home was an impossible place to work in.

If Uncle Robert was a nuisance, he was sublimely ignorant of the fact. He was of a singularly cheerful disposition, and it was impossible to ruffle his sweet temper. Even this last fact was an annoyance to Barrimore, for had Uncle Robert fired up occasionally, his nephew would have felt less of a pig (as he expressed it) in snubbing him.

Mrs. Barrimore, a sweet little woman, over forty, and looking less, had been much exercised in spirit to keep her idolized and only son from wounding her idolized and only brother; hence, she had consented to Philip's plan of getting a little place in the country to work in. He would be near enough for

frequent visits, and would have the conditions he craved for his work.

Nevertheless, she felt sad that he should not reside under her roof.

Barrimore reached the West Hill at Hastings as the sun was setting. The sky was flooded with exquisite color. The sea, calm and unruffled, and of a lovely blue, was dotted over with sailing craft.

It was low tide, and within the harbor (so called, though it had never been completed) little naked boys ran, throwing pink reflections on the wet sand, while fishermen lounged against their boats, which they would soon be getting ready for the night's work.

"I shall miss the sea," thought Barrimore regretfully; "but, after all, I can soon ride in from Gissing."

Before making his way to Hawk's Nest (his mother's house), which was situated near the Alexandra Park, he walked across the hill to the point where the entrance to St. Clement's Caves is situated, and looked down at the old town, with its quaint red-roofed houses, and then across to the little churchyard of All Saints on the slope of the East Hill.

As his eyes rested on this churchyard they suddenly dimmed.

Under a white cross, like one he now saw, rested the woman he had loved. Woman? Eweretta Alvin had been but a girl when she had suddenly ceased to be, and his heart lay buried with her away in Canada.

At five-and-twenty Barrimore had vowed himself to bachelorhood, which was his only point of resemblance to his Uncle Robert Burns.

Never again would he love, he told himself, for which reason he allowed himself a certain freedom with the women-folk who gathered about his mother. Some of these were pretty girls, too, and charming enough

to stir any ordinary man's pulses. Phyllis Lane, for instance, was bewitching, if not exactly pretty.

Barrimore suddenly remembered that on this particular day there had been a garden-party at his mother's, and Phyllis and her father, Colonel Lane, were staying on to dinner. He must hurry or he would be late.

CHAPTER II

A CONFESSION

"WELL, Philip, what about the bungalow?" asked Uncle Robert, as Barrimore entered the dining-room, where all the others were already seated.

Barrimore was flushed and cross, owing to a struggle with his collar.

"I have taken it for three years," answered the young man, going round to greet his mother's guests before taking his place at table.

"Ah, well," rejoined Uncle Robert, beaming. "Dryden says: 'There is a pleasure sure in being mad, which none but madmen know.' 'The Spanish Friar' it occurs in, I believe. It is a mad act going to live alone in the country, but no doubt you will find a pleasure that we know not of.

"Mr. Barrimore won't get interrupted at his work, and that will be a pleasure," put in Phyllis Lane, darting a bright glance at Philip, whose seat was next to hers.

"What is the new book to be about?" inquired the Colonel, "if it is not a crime to ask."

"I scarcely know myself yet," replied Barrimore. "My stories grow under my pen. None of my stories turn out what I expected at first."

"'Invention breeds invention,' as Emerson says," chimed in Uncle Robert. "Ideas are like yeast, and multiply before your eyes."

"Mine don't," retorted Philip crossly. "I have been in a blind alley for a week or more."

"Never mind, dear," said Mrs. Barrimore cheerfully. "You have got your bungalow, so you will have peace and quietness. But we shall miss you. We did to-day, didn't we, Phyllis?"

Mrs. Barrimore turned her sweet eyes on the girl at her son's side. Phyllis was fresh as a flower.

"We did miss you," Phyllis admitted, with another bright glance at Philip. "But Mr. Burns played tennis in your place."

Her face broke into roguish dimples and her eyes danced.

That Phyllis was making fun of Uncle Robert was patent to everyone—to Uncle Robert himself even. It was not her words, but the tone in which they were uttered. But only one person noted that Mrs. Barrimore's sweet mouth grew a little rigid, while her eyes, usually so dove-like, had for a moment sparks of angry fire in their clear grey—and that person was Colonel Lane; but he had a way of noting every transient expression that changed for a moment the habitual sweetness and gentleness of that particular face. The mother of Phyllis had not been sweet or gentle, and her death, some years since, had brought the first lull in the turmoil of Colonel Lane's life.

"Miss Phyllis is getting at me," observed Uncle Robert, with perfect good humor. "Horace says: 'The years, as they come, bring with them many things to our advantage.' They also sometimes bring an overplus of fat! Beware, Miss Phyllis! One day you may have a double chin!"

He hitched his falling table-napkin into his capacious waistcoat. Uncle Robert was certainly stout.

"I think it was very sweet of my brother to play tennis on this hot day, rather than let the game fall through," said Mrs. Barrimore, with an affectionate glance at Uncle Robert.

"I am sure Mr. Burns played very well," Phyllis hastened to say, feeling that Mrs. Barrimore, of whom she was very fond, was angry with her.

"My dear little girl," said Uncle Robert, "I know I look like an exaggerated tennis ball myself, and if I amuse you by my antics, so much the better. There is no duty we so much under-rate as the duty of being happy; Stevenson says that. Be happy, my dear, even if laughing at me makes you so!"

"Oh, but I wasn't laughing at you, Mr. Burns," protested Phyllis. "I admired your pluck in playing on such a roasting day—and you *are* a little stout, you know."

Phyllis spoke so seriously that everyone laughed except her father. Colonel Lane frowned. He thought his daughter's allusion to the stoutness of Mr. Burns in bad taste, and meant to tell her so when they should be alone.

"Tell us about the bungalow, Philip," said Mrs. Barrimore, to change the conversation. (She had caught sight of the Colonel's frown.)

"It is a jolly little place," said Philip; "covered with rambler roses. I brought you some. There are no houses near—not very near. The nearest has a big field between it and the bungalow. There is a fir plantation in front, on the other side of the road. They are going to build me a stable, and I shall hire a horse from Dick Russel, so that I can ride over and see you. Yes, I shall hire it. I don't mean to buy another now poor Jingo is dead. I can't bring myself to replace an old favorite."

The mother looked at her son with critical sadness. She was thinking of Eweretta in her grave in Canada. She did want him to replace Eweretta—and Phyllis was a charming girl.

Certainly, Captain Arbuthnot paid a good deal of court to Phyllis, but it was inconceivable to Mrs. Barrimore that Phyllis could prefer anyone to Philip.

Mrs. Barrimore saw in Phyllis a good, dutiful and very charming wife, suitable in every way to this son of hers. Phyllis might not be decidedly pretty, but she was very good-looking; and, what counted for more, was quite above deception of any kind. She was the kind of "open" girl one could read like a book.

So thought Mrs. Barrimore.

It was after dinner, in the sweet, old-fashioned garden, that a conversation took place between Philip and Phyllis, which, had Mrs. Barrimore heard it, would have shaken her faith in judgment of character for ever.

Philip had gone out to smoke on the croquet lawn—a lawn raised above the rest of the garden and having great veteran oaks at one end, and banks of flowers on either side that smelt deliciously. A hammock was slung under one of the oaks, and Philip was about to get into it and enjoy his cigar, while Colonel Lane and Uncle Robert finished their wine, when a white-clad figure ran down the rustic steps that led from the terrace under the drawing-room windows to the lawn.

Philip walked back to meet Phyllis, who ran lightly over the soft turf.

"I do want a talk with you, Philip," she said breathlessly. "I am just bursting with something I can tell no one but you."

The moon lit her eager face as she looked up at him,

and he saw that her news, whatever it might be, was at least very important to her.

"I am honored, Miss Lane," he told her, smiling. "What is the great secret?"

"Oh, I do hope you won't be angry and scold me! You *must* be my friend and pacify father!"

She linked her arm in his confidently.

"We are such old friends, you and I, you know," she went on, "and now it is all over I feel so frightened!"

"Well, tell me this dreadful thing you have done," he said, laughing a little at her earnestness, for he did not expect any very important revelation to follow.

"You know father refused to let me marry Captain Arbuthnot?"

She paused.

"You want me to plead for you, little Phyllis, I suppose?" he said.

"*I am married*," she answered tragically. "That's it! and now I've told you."

Barrimore looked grave enough now.

"I would not have believed this of Arbuthnot," was what he said. "When did this happen?"

"The day before yesterday, early in the morning, at St. Clement's Church. Charlie got a special license. I came back to breakfast as usual."

She looked very appealing and very childish in her simple white frock, Barrimore thought, and very sweet too. But he was angry with her, all the same. She *was* twenty-one, though she only looked sixteen.

Phyllis was quick to note the change in the young man's tone.

"Now look here!" she said. "Father would not consent even to an engagement. Charlie and I love one another, and he was told he had to go right off to India. He sailed yesterday" (there was a catch

in her voice here)—“some outbreak among natives in some hole-and-corner place, and Charlie knew the language, and that was why he was sent. Now, what could we do but make sure of each other? It wasn't all roses to part at the church door, was it? And we don't know in the very least when we shall meet again.”

“And you want me to break this to Colonel Lane?” he answered.

“Oh, no! no! no!” she repeated. “I want you to pacify him, *if he finds out.*”

“But surely you are not going to keep this a secret?” he asked reprovingly.

“I am,” she answered, “if I can.”

“But *why?*”

“Because the old uncle (or aunt) of Charlie may die at any time, and he is to have all the money; and it was chiefly because Charlie had only his pay that father objected. He won't make half the fuss if Charlie has that money. But if father finds out, promise me to take my part.”

Barrimore could do no less than give the promise, though he disliked the idea exceedingly.

He blamed Captain Arbuthnot most, but he could not consider Phyllis blameless. Surely some other way could have been found by the lovers out of their difficulty, considering the self-sacrificing devotion of the old Colonel, who had been both father and mother to his child since his wife's death.

“I will be your advocate, Phyllis,” Barrimore told her reluctantly. “But you must not suppose that I approve of this business, and I consider that you ought to tell your father at once. I think it was not worthy of a gentleman and a soldier to have proposed a clandestine marriage to you.”

"But Charlie *didn't* propose it," announced Phyllis. "It was I who did that. I told him I *would* be married to him before he went away, and I told you that father wouldn't allow even an engagement. Father *said* that I might be twenty-one, but that I was a child, all the same, and that I should change my mind, and that I must not be bound. But I knew all the time that it was money he was thinking of, so I begged and prayed of Charlie to marry me and make sure, and I told him father would come around all right after. And, you know, Charlie is most *awfully* fond of me, and I can turn him round my finger. But he didn't like marrying that way. He didn't think it straightforward, which is nonsense; for all's fair in love and war. So I told him if he didn't get the license and marry me at St. Clement's before breakfast, I would never marry him at all. That did it."

She paused for breath.

Barrimore glanced over her head towards the drawing-room windows, and saw Colonel Lane and Uncle Robert making their way along the terrace to join his mother. She—simple soul that she was—had been watching the young people on the lawn furtively. Hopes were rising. Her Philip was so young to have his heart buried with Eweretta in Canada.

"We must go in now," said Barrimore. "Your father and my uncle are gone to the drawing-room."

Uncle Robert's voice reached them where they stood.

"Ah, yes, Colonel, as Granville says:

*"Oh, Love! thou bane of the most generous souls,
Thou doubtful pleasure, and thou certain pain."*

And Barrimore thought his uncle's quotation singularly appropriate.

CHAPTER III

AN ALARMING SUGGESTION

THE quotation Uncle Robert made, and which was overheard by Philip in the garden, was a wind-up to a conversation relative to Phyllis and Captain Arbuthnot.

Colonel Lane had been confiding in Mr. Burns, and perhaps it would be as well to give the gist of their conversation, as it bears upon the disclosures of the foregoing chapter.

As soon as Philip, refusing wine, had sallied forth to smoke in the garden, Colonel Lane began to open his heart—part of it, at least; there was another part where a very tender secret lay hidden—to his friend.

“You have heard, of course, Burns, that Arbuthnot has been ordered to India? It is a mighty relief to me, for my little girl was clamoring to become engaged to him. That is saved, at any rate.”

“But, surely, Colonel, you can’t object to Arbuthnot!” exclaimed Uncle Robert; “a gentleman and a fine soldier.”

“That is just it,” rejoined the Colonel. “Arbuthnot is all that, and I have a deep regard for him. But Phyllis has had many fancies before, and will have many to come. She is a darling girl, but I fear she is very changeable. She thinks herself greatly in love with Arbuthnot to-day. To-morrow, more likely than not, she will think herself equally in love with someone else. She is not exactly a coquette, but she imagines herself to feel deeply, when she gets a

surface impression. I want her to become more stable before she unites herself to a man with the chance of spoiling both their lives. It is very hard, Burns, to have to be both father and mother to a wilful girl! However, this particular situation is saved for the moment. Arbuthnot will be away for some time, and Phyllis may, in the meantime, grow older, and get to know her own mind, I hope."

Glancing through the window at this point, the Colonel caught sight of a white figure crossing the lawn, and smiled a little grimly.

"Women are strange creatures, Burns," he said; "I can't understand them! A battalion of men is more easily managed than one woman!"

"Opinions differ, however," said Uncle Robert. "Chaucer says, 'Ther can no man in humblesse him acquite as woman can, ne can be half so trewe as woman ben,' while Robert Burns calls her 'dear, deluding woman.'"

"You, of course, take *Burns's* view," said the Colonel laughing.

Robert Burns the second did not see the joke. He answered quite seriously.

"No, I don't take Burns's view," he said seriously. "I have a sister who is above rubies—a woman who is a sweetener of life."

The Colonel grew serious. "By Gad! you are right, Burns! Mrs. Barrimore keeps my faith in woman from crumbling to dust. How sweet and girlish she looked at dinner to-night! It seems absurd that she should be Philip's mother. Philip looks the older of the two. I think, between you and me, that it is a little too bad of Philip to go away to that bungalow. Mrs. Barrimore feels it, I could see, even while she tried to show interest in it to-night."

"You will scarcely believe it, Colonel," broke out Uncle Robert, "but Philip says my quotations have driven him away."

"You do quote a lot, you know," the Colonel told him laughing; "and authors are proverbially irritable."

"'They damn those authors whom they never read,' " said Uncle Robert. "That is from Churchill, and is to be found in 'The Candidate.' I told Philip so this morning; I had quoted Chaucer, and Philip had said, with more vigor than politeness, 'Damn Chaucer!' Now Philip never reads Chaucer—never has, I should say. In my young days young men read standard works, and digested them. Nowadays they read fiction."

Colonel Lane stifled a yawn, and once more looked through the window at his daughter, now in earnest conversation with Philip Barrimore.

Uncle Robert's eyes followed his friend's.

"Doesn't your little Phyllis appear to be on very confidential terms with our boy to-night?" he observed.

"Yes, she does," answered the Colonel brusquely. "She will be in love with him next—to his undoing!"

Then had followed the quotation overheard by young Barrimore.

*"Oh, Love! thou bane of the most generous souls,
Thou doubtful pleasure, and thou certain pain."*

Phyllis Lane was a good actress—what woman is not? To judge from her gay attitude as she entered Mrs. Barrimore's drawing-room, one would never have imagined that she was a bride of a few hours, with her bridegroom speeding away to India.

The pink lamp-shade shed a warm glow over the

pretty low-ceilinged room which was heavy with the scent of pink carnations—Mrs. Barrimore's favorite flower. Mrs. Barrimore wore some of them pinned into the lace of her pearl-grey evening dress, and the color was faintly repeated in her cheeks. She had the complexion of a girl in her teens, and her slightly waving nut-brown hair was without a silver streak.

Her figure was softly rounded and slim as it had been at twenty. As Colonel Lane had said, she looked a girl, despite her over forty years.

She was sitting among the amber cushions on her favorite Chesterfield, where Colonel Lane joined her.

A band struck up a gay waltz in Alexandra Park. Mrs. Barrimore's grey eyes brightened. "I love a band," she said. "There is a *fête* in the park to-night, I can see the illuminations through the trees. How that music makes one wish to dance! Do you know, Colonel, I can't help forgetting that I am middle-aged. Philip is sometimes a little shocked, I think. *He* thinks me quite old, and only to-day said, 'Mother, don't you think you ought to wear a *bonnet*?' I began to think that perhaps I ought. It had never occurred to me before."

"Bonnet!" exclaimed the Colonel. "It would be ridiculous. You would look really odd in one, with your face and figure. Philip has some very foolish ideas. That bungalow, for instance. I understand that he is going to live there with a man-servant."

Mrs. Barrimore's pink deepened to carnation in her cheeks.

"Oh, you don't understand," she said, up in arms at once in defence of her boy. "Philip wants solitude—

he needs it to write his books. He can't get it here. Dear Robert won't leave him alone. Young people, even the best, find it difficult to put up with the peculiarities of older folk. It is later on that the once young look back, and love these same older folk for these same peculiarities. It is all the same annoyance with old folks and infants, and I remember myself how angry it used to make me when Philip—he was little Philly then—left his sticky finger-prints on the window-glass—and now that my baby is a man, I would give—oh, what would I not give!—to see those sticky finger-prints again!"

Colonel Lane saw the tender eyes grow bright with unshed tears.

He cleared his throat.

"I think I know what you mean," he said; "the man just arrived at maturity neither makes allowances for those older or younger than himself. It is the conceit that covers the just-grown-up as with a garment. But it is a garment which soon grows too small for a man with a fine nature—luckily. Philip is centered in his work at present, and all outside it is of but little importance. He is made of such good stuff, however, that it will not take long for him to look with different eyes on things outside himself."

"We must remember, too, that Philip has had a great sorrow," Mrs. Barrimore reminded the Colonel.

"Yes, I know," answered her companion. "An inward pain such as his can't fail to make him exaggerate annoyances. Do you think he is getting over it, dear Mrs. Barrimore?"

"I fear not," she answered; "but it all happened only a year ago, you see. Philip wants to find out Eweretta's half-sister, and help her."

"Half-sister?" repeated the Colonel. "Had Miss Alvin a half-sister, then?"

"Yes, it is a very sad story. Aimée Le Breton was not legitimate. She was the living image of Eweretta, and both girls were the image of their father, and nearly the same age. The poor girl was weak-minded, so it was said, and lived with her mother at Qu'Appelle, in Canada. They have gone away no one seems to know where. Mr. Alvin left everything to Eweretta, and not a penny to Aimée or her mother. Eweretta died suddenly at Mrs. Le Breton's house. She had gone over to Qu'Appelle to tell Aimée she should share with her—and she died of heart disease, so it was said. She was buried before Philip heard a word."

"And what became of the money?" demanded the Colonel rather sharply.

"John Alvin's brother Thomas came into it. It was willed so. If Eweretta died unmarried, Thomas was to take all."

"My dear Mrs. Barrimore," said the Colonel, "this is the first I have heard of this amazing story. Up to now I have only heard that Miss Alvin died. What kind of a man was Thomas Alvin?"

"He had always been unlucky, I know that," replied Mrs. Barrimore. "He was a thirteenth son, and the only one who survived John. He failed in everything he touched, and was known as 'The Thirteenth Man.' I have heard that men sometimes refused to work with him for fear he should bring them ill-luck. And now you know all I know."

The Colonel looked steadily out of the window at the lights in Alexandra Park that twinkled through the trees for some moments in silence. Then he brought his eyes back to his companion's face.

"So Eweretta's death was worth thirty thousand pounds to this unlucky thirteenth man!"

Mrs. Barrimore's eyes took a look of horror.

"Colonel! you don't mean—you can't mean that Thomas Alvin—oh! for God's sake don't say a word to Philip. It would drive him mad!"

Phyllis had struck a few chords on the piano. Philip was standing near the instrument ready to turn the pages of a song she was about to sing.

Uncle Robert had impolitely dropped off to sleep.

"Forgive me!" whispered the Colonel. "It was a foolish remark of mine. Of course, I shall say nothing to Philip. You look quite pale! I shall never forgive myself for expressing that thought aloud. Won't you come out on the terrace? The cool air will do you good. Oh, what a blunderer I am!"

Mrs. Barrimore smiled bravely and rose. "Yes, I should like to get into the air," she said.

CHAPTER IV

A COMPLICATION

THE morning following the events of the last chapter, Philip was taking an early breakfast alone, preparatory to going into Robertson Street in quest of furniture for the bungalow. He was regretting that his purse was not longer. His mother's income was not considerable either, for which reason Mr. Burns had elected to make one of the household, to give him the excuse to argument his sister's income. (The excuse he gave was his loneliness.)

Philip had artistic tastes, and he would have liked to make the bungalow something unique. He liked to write amid perfect surroundings, for his work was beautiful work—too beautiful to pay well—and he had an idea that surroundings influenced him a great deal when he wrote.

The windows of the room in which he sat were open, and sweet scents from the garden filled the air.

All at once he caught sight of Uncle Robert coming from the gate, hatless, and with a big towel round his neck.

He was returning from his customary swim.

He hailed his nephew joyously:

"The water is fine this morning, Phil! Why don't you go for a swim like me?"

"Not fond of it, uncle," replied Philip a little curtly.

Uncle Robert came in at the window and poured

himself out a cup of coffee, upsetting it on the white cloth, to his nephew's annoyance, and adding to his iniquities by dabbing it up with the table-napkin Philip had just laid down.

Really, Uncle Robert's ways were a constant irritation to Philip.

"Why not ring for one of the servants to put that right?" Philip remarked.

"Never give others a thing to do when you can do it yourself," replied Mr. Burns, drinking off his coffee at a single gulp. "And, by the way, Philip, I want to have a hand in this furnishing of yours."

Philip broke into a smile. Uncle Robert's taste was too awful to bear thinking of.

"Thank you, uncle," he said; "but, you know, I just want to follow my own fancies in this."

"Of course, of course, Philip! I know I should be of no use in choosing your gimcracks. What I meant was, that I wrote out a check for a hundred pounds for you before I went out. It will help you to have things you fancy."

Philip's usually pale face became scarlet with shame.

How he snubbed this uncle, how he allowed himself to be irritated with him and his ways! Yet Uncle Robert never resented it, and was always good-humored and kindly.

This generous gift covered the young man with confusion.

"I don't deserve your kindness, Uncle Robert," he broke out impulsively. "I am always surly with you, and you are always kind. I feel ashamed of myself, and I may as well own it. It is a good thing for you I am taking myself off!"

"They say biting and scratching is Scotch folks' wooing," laughed Uncle Robert; "and if you do

sometimes drop on me like a thousand of bricks, you are fond of your old uncle, all the same, and he knows it! Why, bless my soul! I want taking down a peg or two sometimes. It is good for me!"

"I want taking down a good many pegs!" acknowledged Philip humbly.

He had a very poor opinion of himself just at this moment.

Just then Mrs. Barrimore appeared, looking very girlish, in a muslin morning-gown, which had sprigs of lavender upon a white ground.

Philip rose and placed a chair for her, and when she was seated, leaned over and kissed her.

"You have a new dress on, mother," he remarked. "It is very pretty—but— isn't it a bit young for the mother of a big son like me?"

He spoke with gentle raillery, but the mother was a little hurt.

"Do you really think that, Philip?" she asked anxiously. "I told Colonel Lane last night that you thought I ought not to wear hats. He thought it nonsense."

"Don't you attend to Philip's foolish remarks, Annie," put in Uncle Robert. "A woman is as young as she looks—and you look about five-and-twenty."

"I can't help looking young," said Mrs. Barrimore apologetically.

"You ought not to want to help it," Uncle Robert told her.

"She doesn't!—do you, mummy?" laughed Philip, looking with affection at the delicate face blushing so rosily.

The advent of letters covered Mrs. Barrimore's confusion. One was for Philip. He scrutinized the handwriting with an odd expression on his face.

At last he said: "If I did not know Dan Webster so well, I should imagine he had been drinking! Look at the unsteady, wavering writing, mother!"

"Yes, it is unsteady," she answered. "Open it, Philip. Perhaps he is ill."

"Oh!" ejaculated the young man, as he read the opening passage. "Poor Dan!"

"What is it?" came from Mrs. Barrimore and uncle in a duet.

"His eyes have gone wrong. He is to do no painting for a long time. He is down in the depths," said Philip. "Poor Dan! and his people, who have never approved of his taking up art as a profession, say it is a judgment on him! He says there is no reason to fear loss of sight if he follows the doctor's directions rigidly. It is necessary to take entire rest, and till the inflammation is subdued he must wear a green shade. He has unfortunately very little money, but, all the same, he says he shall take a room somewhere to be away from nagging and reproaches."

Uncle Robert jumped up and knocked over his cup (just replenished by his sister). "Why can't he come here?" he inquired.

"There will be Philip's room," added Mrs. Barrimore. "I will write to-day and ask him. The garden is so restful, and he can walk on the sea-front with you, Robert, and sit and listen to the band."

"And I can read to him," rejoined Uncle Robert. "I shall go out and telegraph."

He was marching off through the window to carry out his project when his nephew reminded him that he was wearing no collar.

"'A sweet disorder in the dress,' eh?—as Herrick puts it," said Uncle Robert. "I can send a wire without the aid of a collar."

With that he departed.

"What a brick Uncle Robert is!" commented Philip, as the bulky form disappeared, "and I am ashamed of my intolerance, mother! Do you know, he is giving me a hundred pounds for furnishing?"

"I am not surprised, Philip, at any generous act from your uncle. He will take Dan completely under his wing, you will see, and will commission all our portraits, I expect, as soon as Dan's eyes are well."

"Well, mother, Dan is a splendid fellow, and a handsome one, too; and, mark my word, some old lady whose portrait he paints will one day leave him a fortune."

"I only hope so," smiled the mother. "And now, I suppose you will want to be off on your shopping expedition. By the way, there is a lovely old oak dresser for sale in a shop in High Street—in the Old Town, you know. The shop is not far from St. Clement's Church—a secondhand shop, of course. You will know it by a big horse painted up on the side. You might look at the dresser. Also, they have a dear old grandfather clock, and you said you wanted one. I should like to go with you to see the bungalow."

"So you shall, mother," said Philip, rising. "But let me get it in order first."

Mrs. Barrimore's tender mouth quivered. She so much wanted to do the "putting in order" herself for her boy. But he had his own ideas, and she tactfully said nothing of her disappointment.

Philip hurried off and caught a tram to the Memorial, from the top of which he beheld Uncle Robert coming back, puffing and blowing, from the General Post Office. His face was red and beaming from pleasant thoughts.

In Robertson Street Philip encountered Phyllis, looking like a flower in her white frock and blue ribbons.

"I have been shopping early, Philip," she said, smiling up at him. "I am going to Fairlight Glen to a picnic this afternoon, and I had to get a new parasol to match my dress. I wish you were going! Oh, father was so horrid about Captain Arbuthnot going home last night! I do hope he doesn't find out! But no one knows but you, and you won't tell."

"What about the clergyman who married you?" asked Philip.

"He was a stranger—taking duty, and you know that father goes to Blacklands Church, though St. Clement's is our parish. But I must go. I have lots of things to do."

Philip watched her as she tripped away in the sunshine, and his heart misgave him. There was trouble in store for little Phyllis he felt sure—and possibly for Arbuthnot. What a fool Arbuthnot had shown himself!

But then!—a man in love—what will he not do? Had Eweretta lived, would he not have been as wax in her dear little brown hands?

The thought of those brown hands brought a mist before his eyes. He saw her before him in all her young, joyous beauty. The rich coloring on her sun-kissed face; the dark masses of her hair; her wonderful dark eyes. He had been wont to call her his prairie flower.

He had a wild longing to see her half-sister, whom he had heard so exactly resembled her. He would be kind to Aimée Le Breton for her sake. But should he ever find her? She had disappeared from Qu'

Appelle so completely. Philip, as he walked towards the "Old Town," had an odd feeling of being *outside* life. His life seemed to be ended, while he still remained to haunt the places where he had formerly lived. Reality seemed to have given place to something dreamlike. Outwardly he was the same Philip, except that he was graver. But inwardly he felt himself a sort of ghost, that took part in a life in which it had no real place.

He was really keen about the bungalow. He wanted to drown himself in work. Work was the only real panacea when the heart sorrowed. He did not wear his heart on his sleeve, however, not being built that way.

As he was passing the two yachts (known as the *Albertines*), he was suddenly accosted by Colonel Lane.

"Have you seen Phyllis?" demanded the Colonel. "An old flame of hers—Herbert Langridge—has just turned up unexpectedly. He is staying at the 'Albany.' Should not wonder if he is come to try his luck once more!"

"I just left her in Robertson Street," answered Philip, who felt decidedly uncomfortable.

"Oh, well, I will go in pursuit," said the Colonel. "Langridge is going to lunch with us. To tell you the truth, I should not be sorry to see her settle down in that quarter. He'd keep her in order! Good-bye!"

"Here is a pretty kettle of fish!" muttered Philip, as he strode on.

CHAPTER V

A WOMAN'S HONOR

"PHYLLIS, if you are as good a walker as you used to be, won't you go to Fairlight Glen by the East Hill with me? We could start directly after luncheon, and get to the Glen as soon as the others."

Mr. Herbert Langridge, who had been persuaded by Colonel Lane to join the picnic, saw a chance in this proposal of an hour or two in which to have the object of his desire to himself, and Colonel Lane had been quite right in supposing that this young man had come to Hastings with the set purpose of getting Phyllis to reconsider a former unfavorable decision.

Phyllis, who knew that things had happened which rendered that former decision final, and seeing no reason at all why she should not listen to pretty compliments for an hour, consented.

Colonel Lane was pleased.

Langridge had a snug post in the War Office, and would some day have a really good pension. It would be a relief to have Phyllis settled. Moreover, Colonel Lane had plans of his own which the marriage of Phyllis would to his mind make easier.

The three were walking on the sea-front near the band-stand, for Colonel Lane had captured Phyllis at the shop of Plummer Roddis, and had carried her off to the "Albany," where Langridge had been waiting in the covered space outside, where lounge chairs are placed.

"I would much rather walk than ride," Phyllis affirmed.

"Good," said Langridge. "We will start early, and not walk too fast in this heat."

"Luncheon is at one sharp," put in the Colonel.

"That will give us good time," Phyllis said.

"And, remember, you both dine with me at the 'Albany' to-night," Langridge reminded her.

"How delightful!" cried Phyllis. "I love dining at hotels."

Phyllis was certainly disposed to be very agreeable, Langridge thought, and he regarded it as a hopeful sign.

Phyllis, hugging her secret, and feeling very important, as being a married woman—also, it must be owned, struggling against a depression which she must hide—not a very deep depression certainly, for Phyllis had but a shallow nature—but depression, all the same; she craved excitement and entertainment to make her forget it. Langridge promised to be entertaining. He was very much in love, and men in love were always fun.

To Phyllis the situation was most romantic!

Colonel Lane had an old-fashioned house, with a garden, not far from St. Clement's Church, chosen because it was roomy and cheap; and the garden having a high wall round it made a target possible, and the Colonel could amuse himself with his rifle.

In this garden a year ago Phyllis had refused Langridge's offer of marriage. (She had refused other men in this garden too.)

Langridge considered the garden unlucky, and meant to try his luck in a fresh place next time. The East Hill was the spot in his mind.

After luncheon Phyllis, looking very bewitching in

her picnic garb, set forth with her unfortunate victim gaily enough.

"She isn't fretting after Arbuthnot," commented her father, as he watched her go. "It is to be hoped he is not fretting either."

The sea was a glorious blue. The hot sun was tempered by a playful breeze.

Langridge felt buoyant.

"Do you know, Phyllis, I have done nothing but think of you the whole year," he told her.

"I was sure you didn't *work* much at the War Office," she flung at him saucily.

He laughed, but he was not altogether pleased. He did not want to lose time in banter. He was very much in earnest.

"We will not talk of the War Office now, Phyllis," he told her. "I have left the War Office alone for a while."

"How glad it must be!" she said, with a roguish, sidelong glance at him.

"Would you be glad if I left you alone?" he asked her. "Have you been glad all the year because I did not come near you, or write?"

"I don't think I thought about it at all," she said aggravatingly.

"Well, think now. I shall not come back again if you say 'No' a second time."

He was very grave now, and there was something in his voice that suggested smoldering wrath.

"Now you are cross," she said, pouting. "You have asked me nothing to say 'Yes' or 'No' to."

"You know perfectly well what I mean, Phyllis. You know why I have come to Hastings—why I asked you to walk with me to the Glen, instead of riding with the others. You know that I have come

expressly to ask you again if you will be my wife."

They had come to a standstill and were looking out over the sea. She watched a couple of white-winged yachts, coquetting, as it seemed, like butterflies.

"Are they not lovely?" she asked, pointing at the yachts.

Langridge took the wrist of her extended arm almost roughly.

"Phyllis once and for all, will you marry me?"

"I can't," she answered, looking at him with wide, innocent eyes. "And I am glad I can't, because you have such a temper!"

"Why can't you?" he demanded, ignoring the latter part of her remark.

"Because I can't."

"That is no answer."

"I can't *really*!" she affirmed.

"Why did you consent to walk with me this afternoon, then?" he asked in an injured tone. "You seemed quite glad to come, and now—"

"Yes, I was glad. I thought you would be amusing, but you are not—no, not one bit. You are simply horrid. If that is your idea of making love—"

"Be nice to me as you were when we were in London, and you shall see if I can make love to your satisfaction."

"But you musn't make love to me."

"Why mustn't I? You did not say that once!"

"I say it now."

He did not believe her. He thought her attitude mere coquetry. She must have known why he wanted to be alone with her, and she had come willingly enough.

"Will you marry me, Phyllis?" he repeated. "You know how I love you."

"I can't."

"Then tell me why."

She felt cornered."

"Will you promise me never to tell a soul if I do?"

He promised readily enough. He must know her objection before he could overrule it.

She drew her small figure up with an air of great importance.

"I am married," she said.

"What!" he exclaimed, scarcely believing his ears.

"Yes, I was secretly married to Captain Arbuthnot before he sailed," she told him. "You see, father would not give his consent—so—we did it. Now are you satisfied?"

Satisfied! He was filled with indignation.

"And knowing that, you allowed me to propose to you," he said bitterly.

"I could not help your being silly," she said, shutting her new pink parasol with a snap.

"You made a fool of me, Miss Lane—I beg your pardon!—Mrs. Arbuthnot."

"Oh! don't call me that!" she said with a light laugh. "You will forget and do it before people, and we don't want anyone to know till—till Captain Arbuthnot comes into some money. Mind! you have promised not to tell!"

Herbert Langridge eyed the girl with something like consternation. He, like Mrs. Barrimore, had thought her a frank, innocent child, incapable of anything underhand. He had known she was a flirt—who did not? but he had thought that it was

mere childish, light-hearted coquetry; now he thought differently.

He avoided all names now in speaking to her. He also increased the distance between them.

"You have done a very wrong thing," he told her, conscious that his words were very inadequate. "It will be a great grief to your father to find—as he will have to find sometime—that his only child has deliberately deceived him. He does not deserve this treatment at your hands. He has been mother and father to you, and has devoted himself to you most unselfishly. If he refused to sanction your engagement with Captain Arbuthnot, it was for some good reason."

"Perhaps you think *you* were the good reason!" Phyllis exclaimed angrily. "I daresay you and father were in league together! You call me underhand, and I daresay you and father have been scheming in an underhand way to get me to marry you."

"Your father and I have neither met nor corresponded since last year," he replied, his face set sternly.

"Well, anyway, you have no right to lecture me! I think you are perfectly—yes, *perfectly* horrid! and I wish Charlie was here—I *do*!" (Charlie was Captain Arbuthnot.)

"Well, since he is not here, I advise you to be a little more careful in your treatment of other men," he reminded her.

She turned on him fiercely. "If you mean I am not to flirt I can tell you I *shall*. I told Charlie so before he went. *He* didn't mind and I shall do it all the more for your lecturing me, so there! I wonder you can be so unkind when you pretend you are in love with me yourself!"

"We will not refer to that again, please. That is done with," he said coldly.

At this point Phyllis began to cry.

Langridge walked on at her side and ignored the tears.

"I think you might try to comfort me a little," sobbed Phyllis, "and my husband gone away miles and miles, for years and years most likely."

"No, thank you! Comforting other men's wives isn't in my line," he told her. "And I wouldn't make my eyes red, if I were you, to excite comment."

Phyllis, noting by the unsympathetic tone of her companion's voice that her tears were unavailing, dried her eyes instantly.

It was quite true, red eyes would excite comment. Moreover (and this was far more important), her appearance would suffer.

"What about to-night?" she asked, after an interval in which they had silently walked on.

"You and your father dine with me at the 'Albany,'" he answered coldly.

"*Now?*" she inquired incredulously.

"Why not?" he answered.

It was quite clear to Phyllis now that Langridge had no idea of playing the doleful rejected lover. He would just blot out this afternoon's episode, and go on as if it had never occurred.

That was precisely what Langridge intended to do.

CHAPTER VI

THE THIRTEENTH MAN

ON the day of the picnic Philip Barrimore hired a horse and rode over to Gissing. He had arranged for the bulk of his furniture to be delivered at the bungalow that evening, and had sent on his manservant, Davis, with a load of provisions, and to see a supply of coal got in.

Philip went first to the farm where his horse was to be stabled, and was met by Pickett, who had come from the hayfield to get some tea, which he hospitably asked Mr. Barrimore to share. Philip accepted the invitation gladly enough. He was hot and thirsty.

Mrs. Pickett—a comely matron with a jolly, red face—and Minnie, her buxom daughter, were already at table when Philip came in. They rose at once and bade him welcome, the mother placing a chair for him, while Minnie went to the big dresser for another cup and saucer.

Philip glanced round the big “house-place” with keen interest. It was the kind of fascinating room he had read of but never seen before. The floor was flagged, the windows small, with leaded panes, and rows of geraniums on the sills. Hams and flitches of bacon hung from the heavy oak beams in company with herbs and strings of onions. Bright copper utensils hung on the walls, where also was an old warming-pan. There was a tall grandfather clock—

much older and handsomer than the one Philip had purchased that morning in High Street. The dresser! How Philip would have liked that dresser, and all the array of earthenware upon it!

All the furniture was of oak, and had, Mr. Pickett told Philip, been there for two hundred years.

"I wish you would let me bring an artist friend of mine to look at this place," Philip said with enthusiasm.

"Glad to see him any time you like, sir," replied the farmer. "That painter-chap that built the bungalow went wild about our things. He wanted to buy that old chest over against the far window, but we can't part, sir! Those bits of things are part of the family—my great-grandfather put them here."

"I quite understand your feeling, Pickett," agreed Barrimore, taking the cup of tea Mrs. Pickett handed to him, and pouring rich cream into it.

"By the way, sir," Pickett next remarked, "do you remember a queer sound we heard? You thought it singing."

"Yes, have you found out anything about it?" inquired Philip, with sudden interest.

"I think the man owning the White House (I forget his name) must keep wild animals, for he has had the little wood, which you may have noticed is close to the house, wired in, ten feet high. I never saw such a thing in my life. It is small mesh wire-netting he has used, and barbed wire is put on it in rows fairly close together. My cowman says this man is building something in the wood, for loads of brick have been delivered."

"A private menagerie, I expect," said Philip. "Who and what is the man? He will be my nearest neighbor."

"I don't know," answered Pickett, "though I did hear his name. He is rich, I should think, for he bought the White House and the wood at a big price, and he does nothing, so far as I know, for a living. There is a woman and her daughter with him, but they never seem to go out. They are very close sort of people, and the servants they brought with them from Canada are as close as the master."

"Canada? Did they come from Canada?" exclaimed Philip.

"I heard so, sir."

Mrs. Pickett here spoke.

"I heard this morning, sir, that the poor young lady is not quite right in her head, and that is why they keep to themselves. It was the agent who sold the house to them told me that."

"Good God!" cried Philip. "I believe I know who these people are. Is the name Alvin?"

"That's it, right enough, sir," said the farmer; "and I remember now that the lady is called Brittain, or some such name."

"Le Breton," corrected Philip.

"Yes, sir, it was that. How queer that you should know about them."

Philip's face had paled, and they all observed the fact, though no one commented upon it.

"I knew relatives of theirs who are now dead," said Philip. "I shall call on them."

It was as much as Philip could do to sit till the meal finished. He wanted to start there and then to look on this living image of his lost Eweretta.

He excused himself as soon as he could and set out across the fields to the White House dazzling now in the light of the sun.

As he walked, he reproached himself for having so

readily credited the evil he had heard spoken of "The Thirteenth Man."

He had come into poor Eweretta's money, and he had tried to undo the injustice of his brother regarding Mrs. Le Breton and her ill-fated child. He had brought them to his new English home to share the fortune. He had condemned himself for their sake to this solitary life.

Strange, indeed, that he, Philip, should have come to their very gates to live! From the bungalow he could see the White House lights at night. Curiously enough, as he remembered this he took a sorrowful pleasure in the fact.

Aimée Le Breton—poor, afflicted Aimée Le Breton—was, as it seemed to him, the last bit left to him of the one he had so adored.

To show this girl some kindness would be like putting flowers on that grave far away at Qu'Appelle.

But Philip was not prepared for the shock he was to receive when he beheld the appalling likeness of Aimée to Eweretta.

The gardens of the White House were large and well kept.

Philip, who loved this type of old-world garden, paused at the gate to feast his eyes upon it.

It was there he saw her.

She was wandering, a drooping and infinitely sad figure, between the rows of high floss.

Her head was bent, and her slim hands—brown as Eweretta's had been—were clasped together.

Suddenly she looked up, saw him, and uttered a wild cry, falling prone upon the ground.

Philip grasped the iron gate, shook it violently in a vain effort to open it.

It was locked.

He saw a woman come out and carry off the girl in her arms like an infant.

It was then that Thomas Alvin came down the garden path, a key in his hand.

He apologized for the locked gate, explaining that his poor niece was afflicted, and it was necessary to secure her within the grounds.

"I fear I alarmed her," said Philip in troubled tones, as Mr. Alvin unlocked the gate.

"She is always afraid on seeing a stranger," said Alvin. "You are Mr. Bruce, I suppose, from Her-rickers?"

"No, I am Philip Barrimore," replied the young man.

Alvin started and paled, but soon recovering himself said: "I have heard of you, of course. You were to have married my poor niece Eweretta. Come in."

Alvin unlocked the gate and led Philip into the house. The room they entered was a well-appointed dining-room.

"I have been trying hard to find you, Mr. Alvin," said Philip, as he seated himself. "And now chance has brought me to you."

"I don't think I can tell you any more than I wrote you, Mr. Barrimore, about Eweretta. It was heart-disease she died of. No one suspected her to have it. Aimée, as I told you, had a fit while Eweretta was near her. The doctor put down her death to fright."

"We will not speak of that, Mr. Alvin," said Philip from behind closed teeth. "I am anxious to do something for Aimée Le Breton for her sister's sake. It is for that I have searched for her in Canada."

Mr. Alvin answered with extreme coldness.

"You apparently overlook the fact, Mr. Barrimore, that I have given a home—a good home, too"—(with

a wave of his hand round the apartment)—“to both Aimée and her mother. Aimée needs nothing. She was poor enough before I took her. Her mother mended shoes for a living.”

“I don’t mean that kind of help,” Philip hastened to explain. “I want to brighten her life. Couldn’t I take her for a drive sometimes with her mother. I could easily arrange it.”

“I have plenty of money for drives if the women desire it,” replied Alvin rather rudely.

Yes, he had come into Eweretta’s money!

“It is a novel sensation for me,” went on Alvin. “I was a thirteenth son, and born unlucky. I was known in Canada as ‘The Thirteenth Man,’ and many refused to work with me because of my ill-luck—which they said was catching! Well, my luck has changed at last, and, by gad! I mean to keep what I’ve got!”

Philip stared. He could not in the least understand this outburst. It was almost as if the man fancied he, Philip, wanted to rob him.

“I thank you for this call, Mr. Barrimore—which, all the same, I think rather interfering—but I must ask you not to repeat it. We have come here to be quiet and to ourselves.”

“And can’t I see Miss Le Breton?” asked Philip, deeply disappointed.

“It could only make you wretched,” replied the other. “Aimée is, as you know, exactly like her sister. Moreover, ever since Eweretta’s sudden death she has got a delusion that she is Eweretta, and engaged to marry *you*. She is always raving about you.”

“She has never seen me till this morning,” said Philip.

"You are mistaken; she has seen you when you were in Canada, though you never saw her."

"That is strange," said Philip unbelievably.

"A good many things are strange in this world, young man," said Alvin with a queer laugh. "And now I think we have no more to say to each other, and I will let you out."

This was dismissal.

As Philip skirted the garden wall he glanced at an upper window and caught sight of a woman's face. It was one of the most miserable faces he had ever seen.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRISONER

THE owner of the miserable face came downstairs after watching Philip Barrimore's departure and joined Thomas Alvin in the dining-room.

"Well, Mrs. Le Breton, we have walked into a lion's jaws," remarked the man, pouring out a wine-glass of brandy and gulping it down. "That man who called is Philip Barrimore, and he is come to live near us."

"We must go away," said the woman. "We must go at once."

"What a fool you are!" thundered Alvin. "That would excite suspicion. We must just stand our ground. No one can disprove our statements—and the girl *looks* mad enough to convince anyone."

"But she has seen him! She is frantic. She will escape to get to him, and we shall be ruined!" cried Mrs. Le Breton. "I wish to God I had never consented to do this thing! I might have known ill luck would follow me, mixing myself up with 'The Thirteenth Man!'"

"Let me hear no more of that hateful nickname," he said. "I left that behind me in Canada."

"But not your ill-luck," she reminded him.

"Look here, woman!" rejoined Alvin. "It was a pretty lucky thing for you that you let me know that that girl of yours was dying, and I took Eweretta to see her. By making Eweretta take the dead girl's

place you came into comfort. No one doubted that Eweretta lay in the coffin that went to the grave, and no one doubted that the girl we took away with us was Aimée. We kept her well drugged so *she* couldn't enlighten them. I came into the fortune which was hers under her father's will, and you and she share it. She passes as your dead daughter, and always will, if you don't play the fool. Have you given her a dose?"

"She won't take it. I have locked her in her room. I wish you would go to her."

"I wish you wouldn't shout so, the servants will hear you. I am always afraid you will lead them to suspect something by your tomfoolery."

Mrs. Le Breton bit her lips with anger. She was still a handsome woman, though her expression spoiled her.

Alvin went on.

"Didn't you often tell me you would give anything to have revenge on my brother? What better revenge could you have than you've got?"

In the room to which Mrs. Le Breton had alluded Eweretta lay upon her face sobbing wildly.

She dashed the tears from her eyes as her uncle entered. She stood up and faced him.

"Uncle, uncle!" she pleaded, lifting an agonized face to his. "Keep all the money; I don't want it! But let me go to him!"

"What are you talking about?" said the man viciously. "You are mad! mad, do you hear? You are mad, Aimée Le Breton! What does he want with *you*?"

Eweretta's spirit had not been quite broken by the treatment she had received, though she was weakened by drugs and unhappiness.

There was now a dangerous flash in the dark eyes, as of an animal at bay.

"Do you think to persuade me to believe the lie you have invented?" she asked with fine scorn. "You and that woman have done your best to deprive me of reason; but you have not succeeded. What have I ever done that you should so torture me? I have told you that you can take the money. I will never claim one penny of it. But give me my liberty!"

"A likely thing that!" laughed Alvin, "and lay myself open to your revenge!"

"Ah!" she mocked; "what revenge could poor half-witted Aimée Le Breton take? You say I am she!"

"I shall never give you your freedom," Alvin affirmed stoutly, "and my advice to you is don't attempt to take it. I have everything on my side. You have nothing! You lie buried at Qu'Appelle! You could not even persuade Barrimore that you are other than Aimée Le Breton. He saw you to-day. He has gone away believing you to be Aimée. He will not return."

Eweretta turned her face away to hide the agony of despair that convulsed it.

"From now you will not walk in the garden," went on Alvin, "you will walk only in the wood. If I liberate you now, from this room, will you promise to behave reasonably? You will always be well treated so long as you behave reasonably, and make no attempt to cross my purposes. You know the consequences of your wild outbursts. They drive me to drink."

She turned and faced him.

"What a coward you are!" she exclaimed fiercely.

Then he struck her.

She did not cry out, though the pain was well-nigh intolerable.

"Coward! Coward!" she repeated.

He went out and left her, locking the door.

She paced the room, backwards and forwards like a caged animal, till the sun set and darkness came. Then she crouched upon the floor, her head in her hands.

A dull, unfeeling apathy was upon her. She no longer struggled. She was faint for want of food, for she had refused what Mrs. Breton had offered her both at breakfast and luncheon, believing—and with good reason—that her food and drink were drugged.

At last a low scratching sound made itself heard.

Eweretta sprang up and listened.

"Miss Aimée!" came in a sharp whisper. "I got the key. *He* is drunk and Mrs. Le Breton is out."

The grating sound of the key as it turned in the lock was like music to the ears of the unhappy girl.

It was Mattie, the cook, who had often before secretly befriended her. Mattie thoroughly believed that poor Eweretta *was* mad Aimée Le Breton, but she humored her by pretending to believe otherwise. She believed Mr. Alvin's assertion that the poor girl was at times violent, and that it was necessary to control her. But the servant's kind heart grieved for the unfortunate girl.

"Come with me, miss, and have a meal before the master wakes, and before the missis comes back from Hastings."

"Are you not afraid of me, Mattie?" asked Eweretta with a pitiful effort at raillery.

"Afraid of you! No, dear heart! You need not tread softly, Mr. Alvin has drunk enough to keep him asleep till the dead rise at the last day. What a pity he ever drinks. He is kind enough when sober."

It was in the kitchen that Mattie served a good meal for Eweretta, which she ate ravenously—for she had deprived herself of food so much from fear of her brain being dulled by drugs. Her brain was clear enough to-day.

Mattie, who had come from Montreal—engaged there at the same time as her fellow-servants, Faith and Pierre, was homesick for her beloved Canada, and perhaps this made her the more sympathetic with this unhappy Canadian girl, who was moreover so beautiful.

While Eweretta ate in the lamplight, Mattie talked to her of Canada.

All at once the servant caught sight of a red streak showing through the muslin of Eweretta's blouse.

"Oh, you poor lamb!" she cried, with tears springing to her eyes. "Did *he* do that?"

"Yes," answered Eweretta with a fiery flash from her splendid eyes. "I called him a coward and he struck me."

Mattie insisted on bathing the broken skin, accompanying her work with invectives on the cruel monster who had inflicted it.

"It's the drink," she said.

"My old lover came here to-day," burst from Eweretta, while her tears fell. "I saw him! Oh, Mattie, won't you help me to escape? You are so kind!"

Mattie set her teeth hard. She believed this was a delusion of the poor girl's about her lover. She knew

the story of the supposed dead Eweretta, and that the girl she really believed to be Aimée Le Breton now imagined herself to be her dead sister.

"Ah, where would you go, honey, if I did?" she answered, "and what would become of you?"

"I should go to Philip Barrimore," Eweretta answered with great decision. "I don't want my father's money. Uncle Thomas and Mrs. Le Breton are welcome to it. It was to obtain that money that they pretended I died; and it was my half-sister who died. We were so much alike that one might easily be mistaken for the other. I remember well Uncle Thomas taking me to see Aimée die. The next thing I remember is finding myself in a strange place out on the prairie. I was dressed in Aimée's clothes. They told me I *was* Aimée. They said 'Eweretta died suddenly, and is buried.' Ever since then they have pretended that I am Aimée. They drug me to make me stupid. Am I stupid to-night? You can't think so. I am myself because I have touched no food or drink that they have offered to me."

Mattie looked full at the girl, full and critically. Could there, after all, be truth in what she said? Mattie felt for the first time that it might be true, this so-called delusion of the unhappy girl.

"Well, miss," she said, "if all you say is truth, then you are the most wronged creature on God's earth."

"It *is* true, Mattie. It is also true that Philip Barrimore came to this house to-day. If I had not fainted, I should have run to him. *He* would have known me! Why did he come? He must believe me dead."

She broke down and wept.

"Look you here, miss," said Mattie, growing sud-

denly alert, "that gentleman who came here has taken the red bungalow across the fields. You can see it from your window. I heard it from the boy that brings the milk from Pickett's Farm. He pointed him out to me and said, 'That bloke has taken the bungalow across there from the governor.' Those were his words. If so, he will find you out, never fear. You take things quietly, and don't anger the master. That's my advice. And now get you to bed before Mrs. Le Breton comes."

"Will you get into trouble, Mattie, for letting me out of the room?" Eweretta asked anxiously.

"I can take care of myself, miss, never fear," said Mattie. "Hark! I hear Pierre and Faith coming in. Go at once!"

Pierre and Faith were "keeping company," and had been for a walk together.

Eweretta went to her room with an elastic tread. She had hope for the first time in this most horrible year. She went to her window.

A light was burning in the bungalow.

CHAPTER VIII

THE KISS

IN coming to Gissing, Thomas Alvin had not had the remotest idea that the Barrimores lived at Hastings. It had been in London that his brother and Eweretta had met Philip, and it had been to the Savage Club that the communication of Eweretta's supposed death and burial had been sent. Thomas Alvin had heard his brother say that Philip was a member of that club.

Gissing had been fixed upon as a residence because of its loneliness, and because it was within reach of Hastings, and Thomas Alvin had years ago visited that watering-place (when in partnership with a man who afterwards threw him over) and taken a great liking to it.

His plot to possess himself of his niece's fortune had succeeded admirably up to now.

Kept under the influence of drugs, Eweretta had been very little trouble.

But lately she had refused her food, and had had terrifying sane moments in which she had outbursts of denunciation.

Thomas Alvin regretted the occasions when he had exercised physical cruelty; strange to say, from pity for the defrauded and outraged girl, but also because he was superstitious. To his curiously constructed conscience, it had seemed only a clever business transaction to get hold of Eweretta's fortune. Moreover, did he not permit her to share it? But

to treat the girl with cruelty was monstrous, and might bring disaster on him. He had never treated her badly when sober. Ill-luck had followed him all his life, as being the thirteenth child of his father, and he was ever watching for some new calamity to befall him.

On each occasion on which he had inflicted cruelty on his niece he had been seized with terror, and had flown to the brandy bottle again. He was not a drunkard, but at these times he got drunk.

Drink is not a Canadian vice, and Thomas Alvin had passed most of his life in Canada.

The thing he feared most, after a glass or two of the fiery fluid, was the spirit of his brother John, Eweretta's father—the one member of the large family who had succeeded in making a fortune.

Thomas devoutly believed in ghosts. He never forgot a scene at Klondyke, where a murdered man had shown himself in the light of the camp fire. There had been men there who, though terrified enough at the time, had declared that the ghost was the man himself—alive, though he had been left for dead. But Thomas had always been convinced it was a spirit they had seen.

When Mrs. Le Breton returned from Hastings, she found Thomas just awake from his drunken sleep, and shivering in the dark dining-room, where supper had been laid while he slept.

She put down a parcel and lit the lamp.

Then she saw him and understood.

"I am glad you have come," he whimpered. "I saw John. I am sure I saw John—"

"Drink," interrupted Mrs. Le Breton. "If you are going to take to *that*, we are lost."

"I don't mean to," the man answered penitently.

(He was in that foolish state which exists when a man is recovering, but not yet recovered, from an alcoholic excess.)

"And don't ill-use the poor girl again either," went on Mrs. Le Breton virtuously.

Mrs. Le Breton's cruelty was of a more refined description, and covered up by kind words and attempted caresses—attempted only, because always repulsed.

"I swear I won't strike her again," whimpered Alvin. "I hate myself for it."

"And don't swear, lest you add the breaking of your oath to your other sins. What we've got to do is to stick to our story, stick to the girl, and stick to the money. We must have no scandals. That would be to court inquiries. Do you know that Pickett's man who gave me a lift in the trap to Hastings asked me if we kept a wild animal in the enclosed wood. He said his master had heard strange, unearthly sounds from our place. You know what that was. There must be no more of it."

This piece of information went far towards thoroughly sobering Thomas Alvin.

"What a fool I am!" he muttered. "What a fool I have always been! I was born cursed! I shall die a violent death."

Mrs. Le Breton jeered.

"Then it won't be by your own hand," she told him. "You are too much of a coward."

He looked at her with fierce eyes in which hate shone.

"It was for calling me *that* that I *struck* the girl," he said.

"But you daren't strike *me*," she reminded him. "You only dare attack what can't defend itself."

From which conversation the reader will gather that there was not much affection between the plotters.

Mrs. Le Breton, however, was not a creature to be cowed by a bully. Misery had taught her courage, while it had made her cruel. She had not always been what she was now.

She had been a gentle, loving woman once, before John Alvin had come across her path.

A pretty young widow, earning her living by hard work, her heart had responded only too readily to the charm of John Alvin. She had fallen a victim to him and was ruined before she discovered that he had a wife.

John Alvin's legitimate and illegitimate daughters had been born near about the same time.

John Alvin had forsaken the woman he had wronged, and left her to her fate.

Aimée had been born a beautiful child, but weak-minded.

For eighteen years Mrs. Le Breton had supported herself and her afflicted child by mending shoes! She had found that so she could best make a living, and at the same time remain at home. Home? It had merely been a two-roomed "shack."

For eighteen years she had nursed her hatred against John Alvin—John Alvin, who had grown rich, and had a house in Montreal, and could send his daughter Eweretta to a fine school, and could take her to visit London.

Mrs. Le Breton kept herself informed of the movements of John Alvin. She rejoiced when his wife died. She also nursed for a brief space the hope that then he would remember the mother of his other child and do her justice.

With infinite difficulty she journeyed with her

daughter to Montreal to be spurned by John Alvin, and sent back to her boot-mending.

It was then she had seen Eweretta and been struck by the appalling likeness she bore to Aimée.

It was at the death of John Alvin that Mrs. Le Breton's hopes once more rose.

Surely he would leave something out of his riches for his afflicted daughter!

She sought Thomas Alvin, who was at that time at Regina. He, too, had had hopes of getting something under his brother's will, and was furious because all was left to Eweretta.

But at her death it was all to come to him.

Aimée was at that time dying, and Thomas Alvin conceived the idea of inducing Eweretta (an easy matter with the tender-hearted girl) to come and visit her half-sister, and befriend her, and then substitute one sister for the other, and claim the money.

It had been so easy!

The dead girl was dressed in Eweretta's fine clothes, while Eweretta herself was heavily drugged, and dressed in her half-sister's poor garments. No one doubted that it was indeed Eweretta who was buried at Qu'Appelle.

So Philip Barrimore heard of the death of John Alvin and of Eweretta at the same time. As we know, he journeyed to Canada and saw the grave where his beloved one was supposed to lie.

But no one could tell him what had become of Aimée and her mother.

And now, within a year, Philip had by the merest chance come to be a near neighbor of those he sought! But little did he dream that the girl who passed for Mrs. Le Breton's daughter was his own lost Eweretta.

After supper Mrs. Le Breton left Thomas Alvin to himself and went to look at Eweretta. She discovered that the girl was asleep upon her bed, fully dressed. She imagined that Thomas Alvin had left the door of the room unlocked.

Eweretta was apparently dreaming a pleasant dream, for a smile played about her lips.

So pale was she, that she looked like a waxen figure more than a living girl.

Mrs. Le Breton stooped the candle over her, and looked earnestly at her. Then her mouth quivered; tears chased each other down her cheeks.

She was so like Aimée!

The old dead womanliness woke in her at that moment, and with an irresistible impulse she leaned over and softly kissed the pale face.

CHAPTER IX

PHYLLIS THROWS A BOMB

PHILIP BARRIMORE, in a penitent mood regarding grieving his sweet mother by going from under her roof, also regarding his irritability towards his good uncle, laid himself out to follow their wishes in the last days before he finally installed himself with his man Davis at the bungalow. August had come in, and the weather being ideal, there had been little excursions to places of interest round Hastings—a form of amusement dear to the heart of Mrs. Barrimore.

Colonel Lane and Phyllis had sometimes been with them, as well as Dan Webster, who had arrived.

Philip had put aside his work entirely, knowing that he would soon be without interruptions, and he was a little annoyed with himself that he was rather enjoying this sacrifice of time.

Having discovered Aimée, and having found her inaccessible, he had reconciled himself to the inevitable. After all, what could he do that could really help a demented girl? And would not the sight of her keep alive his old sorrow?

His neighbors of the White House kept to themselves. He was not likely to see anything of them.

The bungalow was furnished to his liking, and Davis, who had been a soldier, would make an excellent servant. Philip felt more reconciled to life than he had done for a long while.

Dan Webster's cheerfulness under his affliction was not without its influence on Philip.

To have the eyes go wrong, for a young painter of such promise, was nothing less than a catastrophe, yet Dan never played the part of a wet blanket.

True, he was petted and made much of all round. Phyllis Lane was particularly sweet to him.

Phyllis, who was under her father's displeasure because she had refused the offer of Herbert Langridge the second time, saw with some relief that her kindness to Dan did not meet with parental reproof. But Philip rather quenched her spirits by speaking a warning word.

After dinner Mrs. Barrimore, Uncle Robert, Dan and Philip had gone to the sea-front to listen to the band and watch the gay pedestrians, when they encountered Colonel Lane and his daughter. Phyllis at once allied herself to Dan.

Chairs for all the party could not be found together, so Phyllis and Dan were at some distance from the others.

Philip, who found himself alone with Uncle Robert, watched Phyllis furtively, while his uncle poured out quotations.

Phyllis was apparently fascinating the susceptible Dan, to judge from the smile on his face and from the way his head bent towards her.

Phyllis's small, piquant face, veiled illusively with white tulle, which covered the enormous hat, confining the sprays of pink roses, was lifted to Dan.

Luckily Dan was perforce wearing a shade.

But Phyllis's voice was low and musical, and Dan had ears intact. Moreover, Philip observed, Phyllis's little delicately-gloved hand now and again rested on Dan's coat-sleeve as she emphasized some remark.

No! Philip decided. This would not do.

It was seemingly a necessity to Phyllis to have a male appendage—to have a man to flirt with, innocently but foolishly.

Dan, poor unfortunate Dan, with his shaded eyes, was better than no one.

Philip could think of only one means of keeping silly, giddy little Phyllis—who was a dear baby, all the same—within bounds. Philip must attach himself to her, keep her always in tow, and thus guard her. No harm could come to him, as he knew she was married; and there was a much stronger reason, too, why she could never hurt him. No harm could come to her, if she chose to mildly flirt with him. Though Philip was actually only a few years older than Phyllis, his interest in the alluring little woman was paternal.

The warning word which Philip took the opportunity of saying to Phyllis was spoken when the two young people were on their way back to Hawk's Nest. The others had chosen to take a tram from the Memorial.

The clock on Blacklands Church chimed the half-hour as the actual warning was spoken. They had all left the sea-front at ten o'clock when the band played "God save the King" (and the Colonel had been a little annoyed even with his dear Mrs. Barri-more for begging him to come back with them for an hour, at a moment when he was "standing at attention," like a good soldier, to honor the King).

It had taken just half an hour for Philip to screw up his courage to quench the flow of Phyllis's inconsequent chatter.

"Phyllis, you must be more discreet in your inter-

course with Mr. Webster," he said, as the clock struck.

"What do you mean?" inquired Phyllis, as if greatly mystified, though she perfectly understood. "Do you think I tire him? He *seemed* to like to hear me talk."

"You must not let poor Dan get fond of you, Phyllis," Philip told her with a fine assumption of sternness.

"But everyone *does*, you know," Phyllis answered, as if stating an everyday fact of no particular importance.

"You don't know Dan as I do," Philip hammered away. "He is apt to become very much in earnest. He thinks you are free. It is not fair to him, Phyllis."

"You always lecture me," Phyllis said; "yet I like you, and it is to you I bring my worries."

Philip laughed. Worries? What did this small person—this captivating little bride of weeks—know of worries? It struck him that she did not worry a great deal about her absent husband.

"I wish you would tell your father like a brave girl, and face the music," he said, as the outcome of his thought about the absent bridegroom.

"Tell him now he is so cross with me about that horrid Mr. Langridge?" broke out Phyllis indignantly. "I'll tell you a secret," she added, pulling his arm and tip-toeing. "I believe father wants to marry again *himself*, and he wants me settled and out of the way. And I know who it is, but I daren't tell *you*, of all people."

Philip felt a strange stiffness come into his facial muscles. A strange pain gripped his heart.

"Don't tell me! I won't listen to this, Phyllis."

You have no right to discuss your father in this way."

"Cross-patch!" cried Miss Phyllis. "You wait and see, that's all!"

They had reached the gate of Hawk's Nest.

It was evident that the rest of the party were home before them.

Two figures—a tall, soldierly man and a slight, graceful woman—were pacing the croquet lawn in the moonlight. It was so moonlight that the shadows of the big oak-trees had etched themselves upon the lawn.

Philip, forgetful of his companion, strode across the rustic bridge that spanned a brook, and up the terrace at big bounds, to the open French window of the dining-room, where the electric light showed Dan with his green shade and Uncle Robert with his coat off.

"'Satire should, like a polished razor keen, Wound with a touch that's scarcely felt or seen,'" came in Uncle Robert's stentorian tones.

"Where's the mater?" asked Philip, though he knew very well.

"In the garden with Colonel Lane, my boy," answered Uncle Robert. "I should have thought you could not have come in without seeing them—a moonlight night like this, when—"

"*Surgit post nubila Phæbus*," completed Dan mischievously.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Uncle Robert. "Motto of London Coachmakers' Company."

Philip did not join in the laugh. He sat down, frowning, and refused a cigar when Uncle Robert passed the box within reach.

Uncle Robert winked at Dan, which signal was lost upon the young man owing to his eyes being covered.

Uncle Robert had meant to indicate his opinion that Phyllis and Philip had had a "tiff."

Phyllis peeped in at the open door, presenting a roguish face, in which were set two adorable dimples.

"Mr. Burns," she called softly, "what time is it?"

"A quarter to eleven, my dear," said Uncle Robert.

"Dad!" shouted Phyllis. "It is a quarter to eleven."

After that she skipped daintily into the room with a flutter of frills, and coming up to the table on which Dan was leaning stooped quite close and said: "How sad you can't see the moonlight to-night, Mr. Webster. It is a perfect, perfect night!"

Mrs. Barrimore came in just then. The electric light tried her eyes evidently, for she held her hand up to shade them.

Philip watched her critically. His face was set and pale.

Colonel Lane, who had followed Mrs. Barrimore, called his daughter, bade a hasty good-night to his friends, and went away hurriedly.

"H'm!" said Uncle Robert. "There seems to be a good deal of grumpiness in the air to-night."

Philip waited till he heard the click of the gate, then he took up his hat and went out.

"Gone to make up the 'tiff,' I suppose," commented Uncle Robert. "Have a whisky, Dan?"

But Philip had gone out to walk alone on the West Hill. His mind was in a tumult.

CHAPTER X

FOR A SON'S SAKE

WHEN Philip Barrimore reached the West Hill he strode along towards the entrance to St. Clement's Caves and stood bare-headed near the small wooden lighthouse looking down at the Old Town; at the moonlit sea, where the riding lights of the fishing fleet shone like jewels; at the ruby light at the end of the long arm of the unfinished harbor wall. Very peaceful, very lovely it all looked under the moon; but Philip's heart was full of unrest and resentment. How *dared* the Colonel!

How could his mother! how could she!

He turned his face in the direction of the ruined castle.

The light from the *Sovereign* lightship flashed and disappeared.

"The thing is unbelievable! monstrous!" he exclaimed aloud. "How blind I have been!"

Perhaps Philip had been a little selfish as well as blind.

The mother, who was still young, and who, fresh from school, had been married to Philip's father, a man twenty years her senior, and a hard, unsympathetic barrister, who though strictly honorable, had no affection in his composition; the mother Philip had looked upon as a sort of asset of his own. His father being dead the mother naturally became the property of the son. She had been a dutiful

wife. It now remained to her to be a dutiful mother. Philip, whom she loved tenderly, could leave her and take a bungalow; but she had not the right to leave him. Above all, she had no right to entertain the idea of a second marriage. That the mother of a grown-up son should fall in love seemed scarcely decent.

This had been Philip's idea. He somehow felt that the whole business was a sacrilege. He conceived of his beautiful mother as a permanent pure jewel set in the old home. She was to grow white-haired there. She was to be always there, waiting his own erratic returns.

He had resented her young appearance as "unsuitable." He had gently but firmly reproved her for wearing hats instead of bonnets; for gowning herself as his sister should have been gowned, if he had had one.

Philip was five-and-twenty, and had the arrogance of that age.

Mrs. Barrimore was forty-two but she looked no more than thirty. And art did not enter into the illusion. Mrs. Barrimore's smooth, wild-rose complexion was innocent of powder. The entire absence of lines was not due to massage. The masses of wavy nut-brown hair were her own, and no dyer's art bestowed the rich color. The clear grey eyes had the tender light and brightness of youth.

And Colonel Lane was in love with her! Phyllis—silly, inconsequent Phyllis—had seen it, while he, with his quick insight, had never suspected it till to-night!

He might have known—yes, he certainly ought to have known—that Uncle Robert could not have been the attraction which made Colonel Lane so frequent a visitor at Hawk's Nest.

He had thought that the mother encouraged the

Colonel's visits, and he put it down to a bit of innocent scheming on her part to bring about a marriage between him and Phyllis. Yes, he had been utterly blind. He felt humiliated.

He felt also virtuous.

Had he not been cheerfully giving up days of his precious time chiefly to please his mother? Had he not gone with her to her precious garden-parties, and on excursions to Rye and Winchelsea? Had he not controlled his impatience with Uncle Robert's quotations—for nearly a week? Uncle Robert! did *he* know about this unseemly affair? If he did know, did he approve?

But he, Philip, was the head of the family, not Uncle Robert.

Philip paced backwards and forwards on the hill, till the clocks of All Saints' and of St. Clement's struck a duet.

It was midnight.

Philip turned and walked rapidly homewards across the hill, and down the hundred odd steps that brought him into the Queen's Road, up which he strode towards Hawk's Nest.

As he expected, the mother was waiting up for him in the dim drawing-room, where now only one lamp was burning, subdued under a pink shade.

He saw her as he came upon the terrace. She heard his step, and came out through the open French window.

"You are late, dearest," she said a little anxiously.

Her tone softened him. Was ever a voice so tender—even Eweretta's! Was ever love so great or patience so enduring as this mother's?

He with his moods, his trying moods, his irritability—but—was she not going to fail him?

"Mother," he said gently as he drew her hand through his arm, "I have been on the West Hill in a vile temper. Mother, tell me I have been mistaken. I—"

She interrupted him tremulously.

"Dear, I think I understand," she said. "Have you only just seen it? I will tell you everything, and then, dearest, I will ask you not to refer to it again. Colonel Lane asked me to marry him to-night."

"And you?" he asked abruptly.

"I refused him."

"My own mother!" Philip said, drawing her close and kissing her. He found her cheek wet.

"I knew," she said, with a break in her voice, "that you would not wish it."

"Is it likely?" he broke out in his masterful way. "You have done with all that sort of thing. It is for girls in their teens, not for mothers of grown-up sons. At your time of life—"

"Philip, am I so very old?" She laughed girlishly through her tears.

How charming was this mother, after all! Philip, looking at her as she stood there in the moonlight, realized that the Colonel could not well be blamed.

Philip loved her dearly though a little selfishly, as we have shown. His next words proved this still more.

"I could not bear it, mother—to lose you. I have always been first in your heart, and now, I have only you in all the world!"

Mrs. Barrimore's love and pity rose at these words, in such a flood to her tender heart, that she was glad even, that she had to-night made a sacrifice for her boy's sake. To her, it had been sweet to dwell for

even half an hour in the paradise, the door of which was now closed against her. Being a woman, and a loving woman, she had longed for love such as other women had, and which she had never known till to-night, when the grizzled soldier had spoken.

She might well have reminded Philip that he had twice dethroned her in his affections. First for Eweretta and secondly for his work.

Being what she was, she held her peace.

But Colonel Lane had his own views. He was what Phyllis called very "grumpy" on the way home, and when she mentioned Philip, had said:

"There is a good deal too much of Philip at Hawk's Nest."

Whereupon Phyllis the "cute" drew her own conclusions.

Next morning, when Uncle Robert came in from his swim, Philip opened fire at once on him.

"I say, uncle, did *you* know anything about this affair with Colonel Lane?"

"Eh! What!" ejaculated Uncle Robert, removing a towel from his neck and staring at his nephew.

"Colonel Lane proposed to mother last night," snapped Philip.

"Oh, he did, did he?" said Uncle Robert, pouncing upon the coffee-pot. "Shows his good taste."

"Uncle!"

"Well, doesn't it?"

"It shows his impertinence."

"Can't agree with you."

"But it is preposterous at mother's age!"

Uncle Robert burst out laughing.

"Your mother is young enough to have another family yet!"

Philip got up and stamped about the floor, his hands

deep in his trouser pockets, his masterful chin in the air.

"Young man," said Uncle Robert, "you were born when your mother was about seventeen. She has devoted herself to you for twenty-five years. Let someone else have a show in."

There is no knowing what Philip would have replied to this, for at the moment both Mrs. Barri-more and Dan appeared, so of necessity the subject dropped.

But Philip, albeit still angry with Colonel Lane, was very tender to his pretty mother, placing her chair for her, and embracing her with extra warmth.

She had refused to marry the Colonel, and he chose to show his approval.

But the pretty pink color was absent from her cheeks, and dark rims surrounded the grey eyes.

CHAPTER XI

A RAY OF HOPE

WHEN Mrs. Le Breton kissed Eweretta, it had been for her dead child's sake, the child she had loved with all the passion of her soul, but with that spontaneous action a flood of repentance had surged up within her. She recalled with what sweetness Eweretta had begged to share what she had with her half-sister. She remembered, too, how she had hated Eweretta for being in a position to patronize her poor, defrauded child—hated her for her health, her education, her mental vigor.

But now, seated on the edge of the bed, she looked upon the sleeping face with pity and something like tenderness.

Why had she in the bitterness of her sorrow and resentment consented to be a party to this vile plot against an innocent girl?

What was done could not be undone! But could it?

She shuddered as she thought of Thomas Alvin.

He was an outcast, a pariah. He had been like Jonah, thrown overboard because of the ill fortune that dogged his steps. Nothing he touched ever prospered.

Possibly the idea gained in childhood that he was born unlucky had helped to make him what he was. His hand was against everyone and everyone's hand was against him. He had led her, Andrée Le Breton, into crime.

She wept as she thought of the little shack where she had laboriously mended shoes. She wished herself back there, if only she could wipe the stain from her soul!

Eweretta moved, and presently opened her eyes.

It was not a hard face she saw now.

"I have been very cruel to you, Eweretta," Mrs. Le Breton whispered. "I am going to be kind now. Forgive me!"

Eweretta, startled, chiefly because she was called by her own name, believed herself dreaming. She sat up, and stared at the woman seated upon her bed. At last she realized that Mrs. Le Breton was friendly.

"Oh!" cried Eweretta, "thank God! you will help me!"

"All I can, child," answered the woman sadly. "But you know what your uncle is! Eweretta, I am afraid of him!"

Eweretta slipped from the bed and placed an arm about her companion. "I am so sorry for you too," she said softly. "You have suffered too."

"I have made you suffer," answered the woman, her tears flowing afresh. "My child was your father's child as well as you. He left us in poverty, while you had everything. I hated you for it. To-night I don't hate you."

There was a sound of heavy steps upon the stairs.

Both women shuddered. The steps passed along the landing; a door was opened and shut.

Both women breathed again.

"You won't betray me;" whispered Mrs. Le Breton. "If *he* knew of what I have been saying to you to-night *he would kill me!*"

"Can't we go away together?" whispered Eweretta excitedly. "Philip would take you too. I know he would. He is so near! Oh, Mrs. Le Breton, let us go—go now! Let Uncle Thomas keep the money. What does money matter?"

Mrs. Le Breton shook her head.

"*He* would find us. *He* would kill us," she said, fear distorting her face. "And if you go alone, he will take vengeance on *me*! Oh! Eweretta! remember the rough life he has led! He has been where there is no law, where taking human life was just no more than killing a wolf!"

Eweretta recognized the truth of her companion's statement. Awful stories had reached her from time to time, when she was at home, of murder unredressed among the lawless lot her uncle had at one time been with. She remembered her father saying after one of these tragedies, "I only hope your Uncle Thomas has not murder on his soul!" An Englishman whom Thomas Alvin had induced to take up land with him had mysteriously disappeared. The two men lived together during one summer in a shack they had built in the prairie twenty miles from Broadview. There was no other habitation within nine miles.

The Englishman disappeared. Thomas Alvin sold the land and the stock and went to Chicago for a year afterwards.

"Our only hope is that your uncle may die, Eweretta," said Mrs. Le Breton, "then I would speak and tell the truth, and you would come into your own."

"But *must* we wait till then!" gasped poor Eweretta. "Am I to go on here a prisoner for years, within reach of my dear Philip! Ah, Mrs. Le Breton, Philip might marry someone else—while I—oh!

surely we need not wait for Uncle Thomas to die! He may live for years and years!"

"He won't," answered Mrs. Le Breton enigmatically.

"But he is so strong and well," persisted Eweretta.

"He will go on living."

"He won't," repeated Mrs. Le Breton, and the wicked look came back to her face. "He has begun to drink."

The candle had burnt down unobserved and now, with one leap of brighter light, sank and went out.

"Get to bed," said Mrs. Le Breton, "I will go now. From this time your life shall be made bearable. My last word to you is, Hope!"

Eweretta looked once more from her window towards the bungalow. The lights were out. Then she undressed briskly in the dark.

She felt herself now that she was not drugged, and could think clearly. Hope had at last come to her, though the outlook was still so dark. Mrs. Le Breton had become her friend, which to the poor girl seemed nothing short of a miracle. Mattie was her friend. Surely help would come now!

But what had Mrs. Le Breton meant by saying that Uncle Thomas would not live long?

Had he some mysterious disease that did not show itself outwardly? or would drink kill him? He only drank heavily occasionally.

Eweretta did not meditate escaping now. It was true that did she do so her uncle might revenge himself on Mrs. Le Breton. This woman had wronged her deeply, but she was repentant. Eweretta could not bring her to a tragic end. Her life since she had known John Alvin had been a tragedy.

Oh, why had her father so sinned? He had been

a loving father to her. He had been so different from Uncle Thomas. How could he have so cruelly wronged a woman as he had wronged Mrs. Le Breton? How could he have turned his back on Aimée?

All this Eweretta felt she would never understand.

What she did understand was that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children.

She lay upon her bed, trying to gather up the lost threads of a lost year, a year in which she seemed to have always lived a dream existence, but the dream had been troubled always.

She remembered some incidents with extraordinary vividness, but others were vague and unreliable. All were disconnected.

Of the voyage to Liverpool from Montreal she could recall nothing except the boom of the water against the berth where she lay.

One of the things she remembered most distinctly was seeing a girl exactly like herself lying in a coffin, and being told that it was Eweretta, and that she was Aimée.

She remembered, too, that her uncle had struck her once, because she would not call Mrs. Le Breton "mother."

It was during the last days when she had starved herself that her reasoning faculties had once more asserted themselves, and she had come to the conclusion that she was constantly drugged.

She knew that always, whether dazed or not, she had known that she was Eweretta, and not Aimée, and had persistently asserted the fact. Only within the last days, when the action of the drug had been stopped, had she understood fully the wrong that had been done her, and the reason for it.

Now, thinking hard in the darkness, she saw that

she must act warily if she was ever to reinstate herself.

Uncle Thomas must not find out she knew.

She had made a mistake in the appeal she had made to him. But he had been under the influence of drink at the time and to-morrow would probably know nothing about it.

To-morrow she would go about in a dazed fashion and mislead him.

Philip was near. There was at once joy and pain in the knowledge of that.

It might be that without any action of hers he would find out.

With this thought she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTERY OF THE LITTLE WOOD

AUGUST was a blazing month this year, and Philip, settled in his charming bungalow, found work almost impossible. Davis made iced coffee "enough to swim a ship," he averred. But even with this stimulant, Philip found that ideas would not flow. He tried a new plan. He would lie in a hammock all day and doze and sleep by turns, and work all night.

The first night of this experiment proved a failure. He sat down to his American roll-desk (a gift from Uncle Robert), and spread out his sheets of manuscript. He would read over what he had done, and see if ideas would flow on. But his mind appeared to be a blank.

In desperation he got up and went out. It was near midnight, and a big moon rode serenely in the night-blue vault above.

His feet carried him, without mental consciousness of the fact, across the field that led to the White House.

When he was close to the little wood he heard a clicking sound, which arrested his attention. Curiosity caused him to seek for the cause.

The house was in total darkness, but within the wood was a faint light as from a stable lantern.

Philip crept round to the edge of the wood that

faced Pickett's Farm, and through the trees saw a man in shirt and trousers laying bricks.

He watched, fascinated.

He had been right in his idea that the light he had noted came from a lantern. One of unusual size stood upon a brick wall, which was in progress of construction. By its aid he recognized the features of Thomas Alvin. He was working with a vigor truly Canadian.

What could he be building? and why did he work at night? Philip resolved to pay other nocturnal visits to watch this extraordinary thing.

But he was destined to see no more on this particular night, for Thomas Alvin struck work with some abruptness and disappeared, having put out his lantern.

The incident served to set the novelist's brain working, as small incidents not infrequently do.

He would go back and write chapter eight, which had so worried him. He could do it now.

And no thought of the girl who so strangely resembled his lost love crossed his mind, though he was so close to her.

Philip had a way of being very keen in pursuit of a thing until some obstacle blocked his path.

It was not his plan to walk over the obstacle, but to turn back. He had been very keen to find Eweretta's half-sister and befriend her for the sake of his first love. The prosaic and large Thomas Alvin had proved an obstacle. Philip did not consciously abandon his idea of being of use to Aimée, but he abandoned it all the same. That he gave no thought to the girl on this evening was an indication that his romantic intentions were done with.

It was a curious trait in Philip's character that he

never knew the precise moment when he abandoned a course or an idea. He always had a sense of shock in discovering that he had done so. He believed himself the most consistent and unchangeable of mortals, and every change of front that he discovered in himself shocked him, as a remarkable deviation from his normal steadfastness.

Eweretta had (so he believed) been dead a year, and his heart lay buried with her. He had wept genuine tears upon her grave. He had vowed himself to bachelorhood for her sake.

Yet had Philip been other than he was, had he in any way been a critic of the workings of that complex machine which was his personality, he would have discovered that it was but an intermittent, uncertain light which now remained of the flame of love called up by the pretty Canadian girl. He would have found it out by the fact that the actual sight of his love's living image (though he had believed it to be only Aimée) had not moved him more. He had not had any urgent desire to see Aimée again because she was like Eweretta.

He would have found it out in his keen interest in life about him, in his work, in his active resentment of his mother's possible remarriage.

A dead heart is apathetic.

Philip walked back across the field with a sense of elation, because the spirit of his work was active once more.

His eyes wandered happily over the moonlit corn-fields at Pickett's Farm, where the shocks stood like miniature tents of a soldier's camp. Waiting for the morrow were these tent-like shocks, for the wagons would be coming at dawn to carry them away to be stacked.

At dawn Philip would go to bed, leaving a pile of fair manuscript upon the desk in that cosy room—half dining-, half sitting-room.

Philip had said to himself that within this room he could sit and nurse his sorrow after work was over. As yet here he had seldom thought upon it, and had sometimes quite forgotten it.

Yet, had anyone dared to tell this young man that he was getting over his loss with surprising rapidity, he would have been indignant.

As a matter of fact, no one did think this. That he did not speak of Eweretta only made his friends and associates admire the stoic heroism which hid a mortal wound. So few wounds are mortal!

Philip entered the wicket gate which enclosed his estate, as he called it; noted that the carnations smelt deliciously, and that his stable was nearly completed; then went into his bungalow, pausing at the kitchen door, where Davis was "clearing-up" prior to going to bed.

Davis made a point of clearing up at night, ready for the morning. He was late to-night, for his master had allowed him to go to the Ridge Farm, where the Cinque Ports Territorials were camping.

"Had a good time, Davis?" inquired Philip cheerfully.

Davis saluted.

"Yes, sir, I had a good look round," he said.

"Visited the cateen, I suppose?" said Philip.

"Yes, sir, I looked in and sampled the beer. It was like old times to be in the camp, and see the rows of officers' baths outside their tents, and to smell the joints cooking. Going to work all night, sir?"

"Yes, I am in a vein now," answered Philip. "You have remembered the coffee, my nose tells me."

"Yes, sir."

Philip's desk was close to an open window that looked across the verandah and over the garden hedge to the fir plantation on the other side of the white road.

A shaded lamp filled the room with shadows.

Philip, taking stock of scattered mental store, his pen poised between his fingers, feels the restfulness of the quiet night scene, which his eyes unconsciously record.

Then with a flash comes the first sentence, and words flow in a steady, unruffled current. The work becomes then a joy, almost an intoxication, and there is no thought of the battle to be fought later with the printed page.

The grandfather clock, bought in the High Street in the Old Town, strikes hour after hour. Still Philip's pen flies over the paper, and sheet after sheet of manuscript is tossed on the growing pile, till at last dawn comes, and the pen is dropped, and Philip, with a weary smile, puts out his lamp and throws himself dressed upon his bed, to fall into a deep sleep.

And through this night Eweretta has lain sleepless, thinking of him, sure of his everlasting love, hoping with that hope which comes mercifully to the young to carry them with wings over the rough places in life's road to the lands that always look so fair far off.

CHAPTER XIII

A JUDGMENT BY APPEARANCES

PHYLLIS LANE had become very exasperated. The Colonel's irritability was phenomenal since that particular evening on which he had been rejected. He took his daughter severely to task for flirting with Dan Webster, and expressed devoutly his wish that his daughter was safely married, and to a man strong enough to keep her in order.

Miss Phyllis would toss her head saucily when she heard all this, and answer with playful banter.

She was exasperated, all the same.

She began to realize now that the startling novelty was over; that it was not altogether pleasant to be married secretly to a man who was gone to India for no one could tell how long.

It would be ages, too, before she could even get a letter from him. (She had, without consulting Philip, arranged that these letters should be enclosed under cover to him.)

One morning, after a particularly sharp contest with the Colonel, Phyllis got on her bicycle and rode over to Gissing, to see if perhaps Philip had a letter for her.

She had told no one where she was going.

Philip, who had given up writing at night, having found the experiment too wearing, was hard at work by the open window, when the aggressive and con-

tinued ringing of a bicycle bell caused him to look up.

Dismounting at the gate, the fair Phyllis made straight for the window, where Philip's head was in full view.

She nodded with an air of *camaraderie* as she fixed a button in her white blouse.

"I've come!" she announced rather unnecessarily, it would seem.

She was looking very charming, though, having lost a few hairpins during her ride, a tail of bright hair lay upon one shoulder.

She put her bicycle against the privet hedge and advanced to the open window.

"I'm frightfully thirsty," she remarked.

"Come in and have some lemonade," he told her. "You don't deserve any for interrupting my work."

"You ought not to be working on this hot day," she said with decision, "and I am Providence in disguise, come to save you from a horrid headache."

"You are more Fate than Providence," Philip said laughing, "to more than one, I suspect. But come in! Davis makes delicious lemonade. It is kept in a refrigerator."

Miss Phyllis made her way round the bungalow, and was soon in Philip's cool sitting-room, and making straight for the mirror, arranged her hair, while she asked, with a pretty blush, which she saw reflected in the glass: "Have you a letter from my husband for me?"

"I? How should I have one?" demanded the astonished young man.

"You see, I told Charlie to send my letters to you," she answered demurely.

"You have made me an accomplice in your crime, then, have you?" he remarked, as he gathered up the

sheets of his manuscript. "I shall get into serious trouble with the Colonel. It will all come out, you know, about this marriage when the vicar comes back and looks at the register."

Phyllis laughed.

"The vicar is not coming back for *ages*," she said; "and another strange man is taking duty now; and heaps of other people are getting married at that church; and my name is quite a common one; and visitors come here often to get married; and—can't you see, silly! it is *most* unlikely that that particular entry will get noticed? No one we know saw us married. The witnesses were friends of Charlie's, and were soldiers, and soldiers never break their word. Oh! *do* ask for the lemonade!"

Philip felt as if he had been suddenly transported from a calm lake to the maelstrom. Phyllis and calm were impossible to be considered in conjunction. He resigned himself and rang the bell.

"I am going to stay on to luncheon," announced this self-willed young woman, "so you may as well tell Davis when you ask for the lemonade."

"Are you aware that this conduct of yours is very irregular, young woman?" inquired Philip with a whimsical smile.

"All my conduct is!" she affirmed, with wide, innocent-looking eyes meeting his.

He did not contradict her. After all, as he had already decided, it was better that Phyllis, the wayward and irrepressible, should play the fool with him, out of the "danger area," than with another. She would inevitably play the fool.

"Bring some lemonade, Davis," he said to the ex-soldier; "and Miss Lane will stay on to luncheon."

Davis saluted.

"After luncheon, you must show me the White House and Pickett's Farm," Phyllis next said, "and the new stable."

Philip glanced despairingly at his writing-table.

"You are not going to work till I am gone," the girl said, noting the glance.

"I am sure I am not," he acknowledged.

The luncheon of cold chicken, with a salad and iced claret, proved much to the young woman's liking, and she did ample justice to it. Phyllis had a good healthy appetite.

Afterwards they drank coffee in the verandah, and Philip smoked; then Phyllis demanded that they should go out and see the White House and the farm.

As they crossed the field, Phyllis linked her arm in that of her companion and began to talk animatedly of Charlie.

Philip did not find all this particularly interesting. To hear another person's perfections dilated upon seldom is to anyone.

As they neared the White House, they saw Mrs. Le Breton walking with Eweretta in the garden.

Both women saw them, and the elder quickly drew the younger one away.

"Was that poor Aimée Le Breton?" asked Phyllis with eager curiosity.

"Yes," said Philip. "Come away!"

"What a pretty girl!" cried Phyllis, with generous admiration. "How Dan would like to paint her!" Then lowering her voice to tones of sympathy, she added: "Was Eweretta really like that?"

"So like, that it is nearly incredible," said Philip. "We won't talk about it."

"I am so sorry," cried Phyllis hastily. "Forgive me, Philip."

"See! they are carrying the corn over there. Let us go and see them."

At the gate of the field Pickett came up to them, beaming.

"Lucky weather for me, sir," he remarked. "Last year I didn't get the corn up till the first week in September, and it was none too dry, and I had to thresh direct from the shocks, for I hadn't straw to thatch the ricks, or for bedding. Of course, there were advantages. The labor of building ricks and undoing them all again was saved. But against that, in threshing from the shocks the grain is a bit soft and juicy. If put in heaps it is apt to heat and ferment. There's a pile of things to weigh with one another, sir. How is the Colonel, miss?"

"Very well, thank you," replied Phyllis, a little annoyed to be recognized, though it ought certainly not to have been any surprise, for Colonel Lane and his daughter were old residents at Hastings, and very well-known figures indeed.

"If Miss Lane would like to look round the farm, Mr. Barrimore, you are welcome to go where you like. I'm a bit too busy to show the young lady round myself, or I should be proud. The horses—that is, some of them—are not working well. I've had them up from grass for the harvest; they swell with grass feeding, and the change to oats always upsets them. Well, good-day to you, sir! Good-day to you, miss!"

"What a talker Mr. Pickett is!" exclaimed Phyllis, as they left him.

"Yes, he does talk. He is in the way of being a gossip too," said Philip; "but he is a very good sort, for all that."

Mr. Pickett proved Philip's words to be true when

he went home to tea—that is, as to his being a gossip.

A friend from Hastings—a Mrs. Hannington—had come to tea with Mrs. Pickett and Minnie, and the farmer entertained them all with his news about Mr. Barrimore's "young lady."

"Them two are sweethearts, if I know anything," he said with a facetious smile. "Miss Lane had hold of his arm, and they seemed mighty cosy."

"Miss Lane is a flirt," announced Mrs. Hannington with disapproval. "I've seen her on the sea-front with one chap after another. It was Captain Arbuthnot a bit ago, but he's gone away. I suppose she's taken up with Mr. Barrimore for a spell. I wonder the Colonel lets her carry on like she does! If she were a girl of mine she wouldn't do it!"

Minnie tossed her head at this. She, too, had been the subject of Mrs. Hannington's disapproval before to-day.

"Miss Lane and Mr. Barrimore have been as good as brought up together, the families being so friendly," Minnie observed.

"And supposing they have!" broke out Mrs. Hannington. "It isn't right and proper for her to come to his house, with him all by himself like he is! I don't call it decent. And what men find in Miss Lane I can't think. She isn't pretty, so far as my eyes tell me. Now, that girl at the White House *has* looks. I saw her as I came by."

"Look here, Minnie!" interrupted the farmer. "Have those fowl-houses had a coat of limewash to-day?"

"Yes, father."

"And was some paraffin mixed in with it?"

"I don't know."

"Well, now, I asked you to see to that," said Pickett reproachfully. "I said to you this morning, 'I want you to see to them fowl-houses yourself, and mind there is paraffin put in the limewash,' and I said it was to be put on hot, and the runs scraped and cleaned, and coated with lime, and the nest-boxes limewashed, and all the litter burned. Them directions were plain enough, I should have thought!"

"Minnie has been plucking and trussing fowls for the market all day," put in Mrs. Pickett in defence. "She has done a good day's work."

"There won't be any to truss if the fowl-houses are neglected," rejoined Pickett; "but let us have tea. I could drink the sea dry, I'm that thirsty! and I daresay Mrs. Hannington is quite ready for a cup."

"That I am," acknowledged the lady with a broad smile. "It's hotter than I ever remember for years, anyway. But this house-place of yours keeps cool. It's the flagged floor, I suppose."

Minnie, who brought in the teapot just then, looked hot enough. But the weather had not much to do with it. Mrs. Hannington always irritated the girl, and, besides, her father had reproved her. But evening would come, and she would hear a whistle round by the rickyard, and would slip out into the moonlight to meet someone. The thought came as sweet balm to her spirits.

There was little balm, however, for the spirits of poor Eweretta.

Eweretta at that very time was watching from her chamber window, watching her old lover and Phyllis Lane taking tea together on the verandah.

How soon men forget!

CHAPTER XIV

"AND WHAT A NOBLE PLOT WAS CROSSED"

It was the habit of Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Robert Burns to put off what they called their summer holiday until September. They hated to leave the beautiful garden at Hawk's Nest, till the dahlias came. They loved the gathering of young folks about them for tennis and croquet, and devoted one afternoon a week to this entertainment, going in turn to the garden-parties of their friends.

Phyllis Lane had gone about always under the wing of Mrs. Barrimore since she had been left motherless, and had always been as the daughter of the house on Mrs. Barrimore's "Wednesdays," pouring out tea, entertaining less familiar guests, playing tennis or croquet when one more was needed to make up a "set," but standing out if enough players could be found without her. Altogether Phyllis was a very useful as well as attractive presence on these occasions.

Now it had been on a Wednesday that Phyllis had ridden over to Gissing, so on her way home she resolved to call at Hawk's Nest and make her apologies and explanations. She so timed her visit as to arrive at about six-thirty, when usually the last guest had departed.

She was slightly vexed as she approached the gate to see several smart young officers from the camp just leaving. She had missed some fun by her escapade, and her escapade could have waited.

On the croquet lawn Mrs. Barrimore was standing; very sweet she looked in her pearl-grey crêpe dress, with touches of coral pink in it, and the shady grey hat. But the girl thought there was a wistful look in her friend's kind eyes

"Phyllis! you naughty truant!" Mrs. Barrimore said in her low musical voice, as the girl approached her. "Where have you been? We have missed you dreadfully."

Phyllis clasped both arms around Mrs. Barrimore's slender waist and looked up into her kind face with roguish contrition.

"I ran away to pay a visit to Philip," she said frankly. "Dad was as cross as two sticks, so I just made up my mind to let him eat his luncheon alone. Did he come?"

"No, dear; but you should not have gone to the bungalow without me," said Mrs. Barrimore in gentle chiding.

Uncle Robert and Dan Webster suddenly appeared from between the trees which divided that part of the garden from the tennis lawn.

"Hallo! Phyllis! a day behind the fair—eh, what?" Uncle Robert called.

Phyllis scarcely heeded Uncle Robert, she was so astonished at the appearance of Dan Webster. His eyes were no longer shaded, and she saw for the first time how merry and bright they were. He carried a racket and was wearing flannels.

A feeling of acute annoyance succeeded to that of surprise in the mind of Phyllis.

This was the first real view Dan had had of her, and she was hot and dishevelled from her long cycle ride in dusty lanes.

Phyllis never at any time deceived herself regarding

her looks. She knew that she was not, strictly speaking, pretty; but she knew that she usually gave other people the impression that she was so. She had a good skin, good eyes, and a wonderful play of expression. She knew how to make the very most of every point she had; and in the matter of dress had coquetry which was never vulgar.

But now poor Phyllis was conscious of her dusty serge skirt, her crumpled muslin blouse, her damp, disarranged hair. She had also more than a suspicion that her face was smeared with dust. It was hot and damp from cycling, and, of course, the dust would stick. She remembered in a flash that a motor-car had covered her with such a cloud of dust that she had nearly choked.

Dan Webster came up smiling, with hand extended.

"Congratulate me, Miss Lane," he said gaily, "I am no longer blind."

"I almost wish you were!" laughed Phyllis a little hysterically, "for then you wouldn't be able to see how untidy I am."

Dan laughed. "I am a cyclist myself," he told her, "and I have often reached home looking like a tramp. But you look quite fresh."

Poor Phyllis winced under this palpable untruth.

"I must hurry home," she said, "or dad will be anxious. But I am glad, really, Mr. Webster, that you can do without a shade."

"I am glad," said Dan; "but I am sorry too, for it means the end of a delightful holiday. It means going back to work."

"'Who first invented work, and bound the free and holiday-rejoicing spirit down?'" quoted Uncle Robert. "It was Charles Lamb who wrote that, I think. Refuse to be bound down, Dan! Stay and

enjoy a little longer! You ought to, you know, for now you can really take pleasure in things."

Mrs. Barrimore stood twisting a long velvet hat-string in her slim fingers. She spoke now, adding her word of inducement.

"It would not be fair to us or to yourself, Dan, to run away just when your eyes are better. Stay on at least a few days!"

"I want you to put my handsome face on record before you go, too," put in Uncle Robert.

"You ought to have a portrait with a bathing-towel round your neck," laughed Mrs. Barrimore.

"A good idea! a very good idea, my dear Annie!" cried Uncle Robert with a hearty laugh.

"I really must go," Phyllis broke in, "I shall be prettily scolded! Good-bye, dear Mrs. Barrimore. Good-bye, Mr. Burns—good-bye, Mr. Webster."

She ran across the lawn and took her bicycle, the three following to see her ride away.

"I think I shall go round and make the Colonel come in. He has forsaken us of late," said Uncle Robert.

That faint, girlish pink came and went in Mrs. Barrimore's face as her brother spoke, but she said nothing.

"Dinner is at eight to-night, isn't it?" asked Mr. Burns.

"Yes, dear," answered his sister.

"Then I shall go round at once and bring the Colonel to dine, and little Phil too, if I can get them. Let the servants know, Annie."

Mrs. Barrimore and Dan Webster were watching from the terrace from which they had a view of the drive gate.

It was not till a quarter to eight that Uncle Robert's

voice made itself heard to herald the advent of the trio. Yes, both Colonel Lane and Phyllis were with him. It was observable that Phyllis had made a very careful toilet. She had evidently resolved to remove the impression she had made an hour or two earlier.

Colonel Lane looked tired and less alert than was his wont. His eyes searched the face of Mrs. Barrimore with an appeal like that in the eyes of a dog. This dear woman had always sympathized, had always understood.

A very lonely man was this grizzled soldier, a man who had outlived relatives—and comrades whom he had loved. Phyllis, the child he adored now, as all left to him, was a continual thorn in the flesh. She was flighty, and thoughtless, and she flirted with every man she met. Her father was in a continual ferment about her. His anxiety made him appear harsh, whereas he had the tenderest heart in the world.

Mrs. Barrimore had refused to marry him, but she had promised to be his dearest friend. A poor pittance he had thought it at the time, when he had longed to call her wife.

But to-night he felt he must have a talk with this dear woman, a close talk, that he might find a little comfort. He was glad enough when Mr. Burns had come to ask him to dine.

Mrs. Barrimore saw and understood the look in the Colonel's eyes, and she answered by a kindly, comprehending glance. She would give him a chance to unburden his mind.

The chance came without her making it.

After dinner Uncle Robert suggested that he, Dan and Phyllis should go down to the Parade and listen to the band, and that Mrs. Barrimore should entertain the Colonel, who was tired.

Uncle Robert's eyes twinkled with delight as he departed with the young folks in tow. He felt himself an arch plotter.

*"'And what a noble plot was crossed!
And what a brave design was lost!'"*

he quoted later on, when he found that his dear Annie had no secret to confide.

Uncle Robert, who was quite sure that his sister's heart was in the Colonel's keeping, wondered exceedingly that she should not take the chance to change her mind, which he felt sure would be offered to her on this evening. He was very irate with that nephew of his for domineering over his mother. Was not Annie Barrimore still young and beautiful?—and had she not been defrauded of love?

Even Philip, whom she had worshiped, had given her but little return. She had been a devoted mother, unselfish beyond belief, and Philip, of course, loved her. But he was "down" on her. He resented her extreme youthfulness of appearance, and though no art helped the illusion, still in some unexplainable way he seemed to consider it her fault.

He had a fixed idea that it was indecent for the mother of a grown-up son to be other than soberly middle-aged, and that romance at her time of life was a levity to be firmly put down.

And his mother knew quite well her boy's attitude of mind, and bowed to his will, as she had bowed to his father's while he was alive.

CHAPTER XV

"STRONG IN WAR, BUT WEAK IN LOVE"

ALONE with Mrs. Barrimore in the dimly-lighted drawing-room, Colonel Lane did not begin to press his suit as might be imagined. He had accepted her decree as final.

They sat at a little distance from each other, she on a low couch, and he in a basket-chair. A table, on which stood a pink-shaded lamp, was between them. He began to speak of Phyllis.

"I wish the child would confide in you, dear Mrs. Barrimore," he said. "She gives me no confidence. It is probably my fault, but I do my best. It seems to me that it is a woman's work. I am only a grim old soldier."

"Phyllis has probably nothing to confide," Mrs. Barrimore told him soothingly. "Young, innocent girls like Phyllis don't have weighty secrets."

"Yet I have a suspicion that Phyllis is hiding something," said the Colonel uneasily.

"What could she have to hide?" inquired his companion.

"That's just it—what?" answered the Colonel. "She made a terrible fuss when I would not allow her to become engaged to young Arbuthnot, but she got over it with surprising quickness. It would never have done—that engagement, you know—for Phyllis will be in and out of love a dozen times yet. I am sorry for the man, though, for he was in earnest."

and he is gone out to quell a native rising and may lose his life. A fine soldier, young Arbuthnot! If Phyllis had stuck to her guns, I might have given my consent when he came back—if he ever did, poor fellow! But she has apparently got over it already. I hoped she had reverted to Langridge, but no! She began flirting with young Webster almost at once. She has been somewhere to-day and won't say where."

"That is the spirit of mischief in her," said Mrs. Barrimore. "She likes to tease. She told me where she had been. She went over and saw Philip."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Colonel.

"I told her she ought not to have done so," went on Mrs. Barrimore, "unless I had been with her. But Philip is a safe friend for her. Poor Philip! he will never get over the loss of Eweretta!"

"I don't know so much about that," the Colonel affirmed. "In these days young folks don't love as faithfully as when I was young. I question if real love ever comes to the very young nowadays—lasting love."

Mrs. Barrimore's cheeks flushed with that delicate pink at these words.

Colonel Lane saw the color come and go, and loved her the more for the pure heart which made those pretty blushes possible at her age. It was this purity of nature which more than anything else kept Mrs. Barrimore so young. Her grey eyes were as guileless as a child's.

She answered hastily as if to ward off more intimate words.

"Oh, but Philip is not like others," she said. "He never was, even as a child."

Colonel Lane agreed. No, Philip was not like

other men, he acknowledged, but mentally he judged it good for the others that he was not. Philip, in his opinion, was upright and honorable, but conceited and arrogant. It galled the Colonel not a little to note the way in which this young man patronized and criticized and ordered his beautiful mother.

Perhaps she had been weak in her boy's early years. She had been too fond, too kind and indulgent. But Philip grown to be a man ought to understand and recompense her love better.

The Colonel was too wise, however, to ventilate his views on Philip to his mother.

He began to talk of Herbert Langridge.

"I really thought Phyllis meant to accept Herbert Langridge this second time," he said. "But she has lost her last chance in that direction. Langridge told me quite frankly he should not ask her again—or willingly meet her any more."

"But surely," broke in Mrs. Barrimore, "you would not wish little Phil to make a loveless marriage?"

"Heavens! no!" he answered. "But I thought at one time she *was* in love with him."

"Won't you smoke?" said Mrs. Barrimore. "You know you can; and I think a man looks much more comfortable smoking."

The Colonel pulled out a pipe.

"Thank you," he said; "but I am comfortable here with you. It is so good to chat familiarly with a dear friend—and there is no friend like you."

Again that pretty flush.

"Why don't you come oftener, then?" she asked. "I am always so glad to see you."

"How sweet of you to be glad!" he said.

Then a silence fell.

The Colonel lit his pipe.

"Home is pretty lonely," he said. "A house-keeper isn't like a wife; and Mrs. Ransom is a particularly hard, dull woman. She is more like an old maid than a widow. But she keeps the house well."

"Well, that is what you want her for, isn't it?" Mrs. Barrimore said smiling. "And Robert and I would be glad if you spent all your evenings with us. Come in as you used to. There is no reason why you should not!"

What strange creatures women were! Could not Annie Barrimore see what a fierce restraint the Colonel must put on himself if he were to be constantly in the presence of the woman he so loved, so desired? Apparently not! To her it seemed natural that she and he should fall into the ranks of mere friends. But her frank eyes told him that to her, at least, it would be a joy to see him every day, so he promised to come as usual. He did not doubt her love for him. She could not dissemble if she would. But he knew that she would obey what seemed to her to be the call of duty. She felt it to be her duty to stand by that boy of hers, that boy who had suffered so great a loss, and needed her.

That he, the Colonel, thought the sacrifice uncalled for and undeserved did not lessen his admiration for the unselfish, devoted motherhood which he saw exemplified in Mrs. Barrimore.

They chatted on till voices made themselves heard from the garden. The trio had returned.

"Shan't I just take a rise out of young Philip!" came in Uncle Robert's voice. "He sniffed at my verses and said I should never get the book published."

Mrs. Barrimore smiled. "Has he told you?" she asked the Colonel.

"Told me what?"

"He has found a publisher for his poems. But don't mistake his remark about Philip. Philip didn't 'sniff,' as Robert calls it. He said publishers fought shy of verses."

But Philip had "sniffed," for all that, and perhaps not without reason. Robert Burns the second could rhyme, but he was not the poet he imagined himself, and it had required the aid of a golden key to unlock the heart of a publisher.

The trio entered the drawing-room, Uncle Robert exclaiming boisterously: "You have won your bet, Annie! I couldn't keep my secret. I've told Dan and Phyllis, and now we'll all drink success to 'Wings and Winds.' Ah, you've won your bet, Annie! What was it?—a dozen of gloves?"

"And when is 'Wings and Winds' to come out, Burns?" inquired the Colonel. "I congratulate you heartily."

"This autumn, my friend," said Uncle Robert, beaming, "and Dan is going to work round some of those Johnnies who put your portrait in the illustrateds."

Mrs. Barrimore now led the way to the dining-room, where a silver tray with glasses was placed of an evening.

Uncle Robert following with the Colonel, whispered: "Can I congratulate you too? Been making hay while the sun shines? Eh, what?"

The Colonel shook his head. The evening had been possibly one of those lost opportunities which we all know about.

"Cheer up, Cupid!" whispered Uncle Robert. "'Between a woman's Yes and No, There is not room for a pin to go.'"

But Colonel Lane did not take comfort. Brave in war he had shown himself, but he was timorous in love.

So sacred was this woman in his eyes, that he felt like entering a temple when he came into her presence; and she had forbidden—albeit gently—his nearer approach.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BIRTH OF A SOUL

SEPTEMBER was nearly out. Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Burns had been to Scotland, where the latter had a shooting-box situated amid magnificent scenery. They had returned to Hawk's Nest browned and invigorated.

During their absence many things had happened. The coming out of "Wings and Winds" was not among their number. The book was to see the light in November.

One of the things that had happened was a great change in the circumstances of Eweretta Alvin.

Unconscious actors in this drama of the young Canadian's life had practically brought about this change.

Disobedient to Mrs. Barrimore's gentle direction that Phyllis should not go alone to the bungalow at Gissing, that young woman had been there constantly during the absence of her friends.

Eweretta, who had had no drugs given to her from the time that she and Mrs. Le Breton became friends, had time after time seen Phyllis with her Philip, apparently on very intimate terms. Added to this, Mattie, the servant in whom she had once confided, and who had not believed her story, told her that Pierre had heard at Pickett's Farm that young Mr. Barrimore was engaged to Miss Lane.

Clearly, Philip—Philip the ardent lover of other days—had forgotten.

This knowledge did not prostrate the young Canadian as might have been expected. She was proud, proud and fearless, when herself, unaffected by drugs.

She accepted the inevitable with amazing outward calm, and instantly decided on her course of action.

Thomas Alvin, since that night when he had struck the girl, had been very much ashamed of himself. Also, during his drunken bout, he had firmly believed he had seen his brother's ghost, the father of the injured girl, which had left a great fear upon him. Consequently, he had tried in his rough way to be kind to his niece.

Eweretta had a sweet and gentle nature despite her pride, and readily forgave an injury, so she had not held herself aloof from her uncle. This made the carrying-out of the plan she now conceived the easier. She had been waiting near the entrance to the enclosed wood one morning for her uncle to come out.

He was still at work constructing something in the wood. No one knew what the thing was, and he locked the gate which led from the garden carefully after him always.

About one o'clock Thomas Alvin came out, and seeing his niece waiting, looked disconcerted.

"I want to talk with you for a few minutes, uncle," Eweretta said in a low voice, which lacked all emotion.

Alvin had become accustomed to Eweretta's normal condition by now. He concluded that she no longer struggled in an unequal contest, and had succumbed to the inevitable. He was utterly unprepared, however, for what followed.

He stood still, waiting for her to speak.

"Let me say all I have to say without interrup-

tion," Eweretta began. "To begin with, I accept the position in which you have placed me; I shall trouble you no more to let me take my rightful place in the world. All that would have made it of value to me is gone. Philip Barrimore has consoled himself. For the future I am Aimée Le Breton. But I ask you to let me be free as other girls to come and go. I ask you to do away with the stigma that rests on me as poor Aimée's substitute. I do not wish to be treated as one mentally deranged. Give it out that I have recovered if you will, but give me at least a chance to make my life bearable. In return, I promise not to betray you."

Alvin was astounded.

"Do you mean this, Eweretta? You will never attempt to—"

"I have already told you," interrupted Eweretta. "Let me come and go as other girls; it is all I ask. Why should I be kept a prisoner? You have my fortune, and I shall not interfere with you."

Alvin stared at the girl as if he could not believe his senses. At last he spoke.

"It shall be as you say, Eweretta," he said. "But if you play me false—well, you know me."

"I shall not play you false," she said simply, "and from now never use the name Eweretta again, or you will betray *yourself*."

As she spoke she glanced over the garden hedge.

"Look," she said, "and you will see why I must never rise from the dead."

Philip Barrimore and Phyllis Lane were crossing the field, walking towards Pickett's Farm. Phyllis had her arm linked through Philip's.

Then Alvin understood.

Perhaps the first real pity he had ever felt for a

human creature possessed him just then. From his earliest infancy his hand had been against everyone and everyone's hand against him. Ill-luck had dogged his every step and embittered him. He had come to think himself a sport of the gods. All tenderness had been strangled in its birth. "Tooth and claw, tooth and claw," he had told himself; there was nothing else for him. And he had stolen this girl's fortune. He had wrecked her life. He had treated her brutally.

As her hand indicated the two young people talking together confidentially as if lovers, his heart smote him.

Eweretta, pale and beautiful, calm as one who knows there is nothing left to hope for, moved him as he had never before been moved. He also felt an intense self-pity. If anyone had ever loved him as Eweretta had loved that man, he might not have been what he was.

"Eweretta, I am—sorry for you," was all he found to say.

But the tone in which he spoke was one the girl had never before heard from him.

With ready sympathy she extended her hand to the man who had so wronged her.

"No! no!" he exclaimed. "I can't! Eweretta, I have been a brute to you."

"Let us forget it, uncle. Let us forget it all," cried the girl, genuinely touched. "You never had a chance. You never had a friend. I will care for you."

Never in the whole course of his life had Thomas Alvin had sympathy shown him before, and now it came from his victim—the girl he had defrauded of all.

It was as if a soul had agonized birth in him at that moment.

Such a divine forgiveness!

The thought of it filled him with a tempest of self-accusation, of regret, of new-born devotion.

"Eweretta, I will make a clean breast of it. I will give up all. I will tell Philip Barrimore. He will come back to you!" he exclaimed.

The girl's face took on a look of pain.

"No, uncle, no," she said very gently. "I would not again be Eweretta. I would not spoil the happiness of those two. Philip believes me dead. Let him go on believing it. Let him live his life. Don't you see that if Philip knew that I was myself, and not Aimée, he would feel obliged to—— Oh, I can't bear to think of it! He has taught himself to forget. We could never be what we were to each other. And how could I make that other girl suffer what I have suffered? As to the money, I give it you freely. I live here. I have all I want except my freedom. I want to go out—to be as others."

"And by heaven you shall!" exclaimed Alvin.

It was no passing emotion, this complete change of front in Alvin.

To the pariah, the outcast, who receives smypathy, comes a devotion unimaginable to those who have always had friends. From that moment Alvin became possessed of a dog-like devotion to Eweretta.

Mrs. Le Breton could not in the least understand it. She was not a woman of great intelligence. To her mind Thomas Alvin had been born not merely unlucky, but a "bad lot." But to her mind his brother had been a worse man than he. John Alvin had not been born an unlucky number. He had succeeded in life. But what had he been? Had he not

left her and her child to starve? Had not his abandonment of herself in her extremity caused poor Aimée to be what she had been?

The chance words of a midwife had cursed Thomas Alvin. When he had been born, this woman had said, "The thirteenth child is always unlucky," and the silly mother had harped upon it, in the boy's hearing, harped on it constantly, till the boy had come to believe in it. From a very early age he had decided that nothing he did greatly mattered, as he was predestined to ill-luck. Neither he nor anyone else seemed to realize that it was his attitude, his acceptance of a superstition that accounted for the ill-luck that had ever pursued him.

Thomas Alvin had been bitterly envious of his brother John. All that John touched had prospered. John had grown rich. Yet he had not been immaculate. He had betrayed a trusting woman. He had forsaken her and the child of their guilt. The woman had had to mend shoes to keep life in herself and her half-witted daughter.

When Thomas had applied to his brother for a little help, after he had been suffering from frost-bite, John had spurned him from the door. Yet John had the good opinion of all. John had no doubt very good reasons for refusing to help his good-for-nothing brother. (The story of Mrs. Le Breton had not reached Montreal, where John's fine house was situated.)

John was handsome. It was from him that both Eweretta and Aimée had got their looks. The girls were refined, feminine *répliqués* of their father.

The likeness Eweretta bore to the hated John had made the task of Thomas the easier. He hated her because she looked at him with John's eyes. The plot

to rob the girl of money and liberty had seemed to Thomas a right and just retribution at the time when he conceived it. The wrongs of both Mrs. Le Breton and himself would be avenged by the substitution of Eweretta for Aimée. If Eweretta suffered, well and good. Did not the Bible say that children had to suffer for the sins of their fathers? Besides, had not Eweretta had all the sweets of life up to the time of her father's death? Had she not had education, travel, fine dresses and a carriage to ride in? Let her taste what her father's victims had tasted!

This had been the attitude of Thomas Alvin, and Eweretta's gentle words, above all, the tone in which they had been uttered, had completely changed it.

There are people who refuse to believe in "conversion," which is the sudden and complete over-turn of one kind of life for another. "Can the leopard change his spots?" they ask.

Yet there is such a thing as moral earthquake. Some great emotion sunders the hard rock of character; rifts appear, from which issue new and altogether undreamt-of impulses.

As natural earthquakes change the conformation of the land, so moral earthquake can change the characteristics of a human being.

"Let us forget it! You never had a chance!"

Few words and simple ones, yet a new man arose at the sound of them.

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT A DOG'S LEASH PREVENTED

PHILIP BARRIMORE'S new book was growing to his full satisfaction under his pen, despite the frequent interruptions occasioned by the visits of Phyllis Lane.

Phyllis had received one letter from her husband—a cheerful letter, which touched only lightly on the dangers he was going to encounter in quelling the native rising—the purpose for which he had been sent out. He did earnestly beg permission to inform Colonel Lane of their secret marriage, expressing regret that they could not have been open about it all.

This angered Phyllis. She knew that she alone was responsible for the secret marriage. She had clamored for it; she had insisted, even with tears, partly because she wanted to prove to her father that she was a young woman not to be thwarted, and partly because the spice of romance appealed to her.

No, she would certainly *not* give Charlie permission to make a clean breast of it, she told Philip. It was really very unkind of Charlie to worry her like this, when he must know that she had quite enough to bear, thinking of him "millions and millions of miles away," and very likely getting himself killed by those horrid natives.

That was the way Phyllis had spoken to Philip.

But she had written over about a quire of paper to her husband, using the most extravagant endearments, but telling him that if he wanted to make her bear all the brunt of their escapade by herself—well, he had only to do what he proposed and inform her father.

She walked down to the General Post Office with this precious letter to get it weighed before posting.

As she was fixing the stamps, who should enter the office but Colonel Lane himself. Close behind him was a woman, who had a dog on a leash.

Colonel Lane looked with some curiosity at the address of the letter which required so much extra postage.

Then he saw.

He would not make a scene in a public place. He would follow his daughter outside, and ask her not to post the letter till they had had a little conversation about it.

But Phyllis turned and looked over her shoulder, and seeing her father, darted laughingly to the door.

Colonel Lane was about to follow when his foot caught in the leash of the dog, and he had to disentangle himself.

Consequently, when he emerged, it was to see his daughter coming empty-handed from the first of the two big letter-boxes.

She glanced up from under an enormous hat-brim and smiled saucily.

"Going anywhere, dad?" she inquired innocently, as she tried to button a glove which was a trifle too small.

"I *was* going over to Brighton," he answered briefly.

"Oh! then why change your mind?" inquired Phyllis.

"Because I want to talk to you about the letter you have just posted."

They had started walking in the direction of the Clock Tower, and instead of taking the way to the railway station, Colonel Lane piloted his daughter across the tram lines, past the side of the Queen's Hotel, and across to the spot where the two *Albertaines* were hauled up.

Phyllis knew quite well that her father was seeking the long seat opposite the "Albany," where they could sit and talk unobserved, for at this hour the band was playing higher up on the Parade, and it was there that the holiday crowd gathered.

Phyllis had guessed rightly, for coming to the seat that runs the full length of the enclosed garden in front of the "Albany," Colonel Lane suggested that they should sit down.

Phyllis was far from comfortable.

"I am sorry that my little girl should deceive me," began the Colonel in pained tones.

"Oh, don't be cross!" said Phyllis, tugging viciously at a lace scarf which she was wearing, and which had caught on a button of her blouse. "There! now I have torn it!" she exclaimed.

"You know that you and Captain Arbuthnot were not to hold any communication during his absence," went on the Colonel, ignoring his daughter's remarks. "It is not treating that young man fairly—or me."

"Oh, dad, let us talk of something else," broke out Phyllis.

The Colonel began to lose patience. "I shall write to Captain Arbuthnot," he said, "and express

a wish that he leaves your letter unanswered. He is a gentleman and a soldier, and will understand. Women have no sense of honor."

(The speaker made a mental reservation in favor of Mrs. Barrimore.)

"Any more for the motor boat?" shouted a boatman in raucous tones. "Come and have a jolly sail! We're just a-going to start!"

"Oh, dear! do go to Brighton and leave me in peace!" cried Phyllis. "You'll see some day the mistake you have made in your treatment of me! You complain that I deceive you, but you force me to do it! I love Captain Arbuthnot."

"My dear child, you *think* you do. If I were sure this love you speak of would be *lasting*, I would act quite differently. Let us see it properly tested by absence and by silence. If when Captain Arbuthnot comes back from India you are both of the same mind, I will make no further objection. Is not that enough?"

"You will get a big surprise when he does come back," muttered Phyllis.

Just then to the girl's great relief Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Burns came up.

Uncle Robert was in a state of pleased excitement.

"Do come to the bandstand!" he panted. "Come at once, and I will show you the most beautiful girl in the world!"

"It is poor Eweretta's half-sister, Aimée Le Breton," explained Mrs. Barrimore. "She is with her uncle, listening to the music. I think she is surpassingly beautiful, and now I do not wonder that poor Philip is consecrated to Eweretta's memory. I never saw Eweretta, but I am told that the sisters were

remarkably alike. It has been a lasting regret of Philip's that he had no photograph of Eweretta."

Uncle Robert beamed as a thought crossed his mind, to which he gave instant expression.

"Dan shall paint Aimée Le Breton!" he exclaimed. "I will move heaven and earth to bring it about, and I will give the picture to Philip."

"But this poor girl is not—quite right, I understand," said the Colonel. "I hear that no one is allowed to visit her."

"A big mistake—now, anyway," vociferated Uncle Robert. "She is out like anyone else, and looks as sane as you—but sad. Yes, there is no doubt she looks sad. A lovely girl! Won't Dan like his job! The old uncle is a rough sort of fellow, but he answered quite pleasantly when I spoke to him. I didn't tell him who I was, though. Come along and see them before they go."

Eweretta was seated on a deck-chair near the bandstand. She was wearing a white serge costume and a big white hat, which set off her dark beauty and wonderful complexion. The sea air had given color to her otherwise pale face. She looked almost out of place with her uncouth companion.

Phyllis, who had already caught sight of her in the garden of the White House, was amazed at the change in her.

"I shouldn't wonder," she whispered to Mrs. Barimore, "if Philip falls in love with her, as she is so like Eweretta."

"Ah, no!" said the mother. "Philip will remain faithful. Moreover, that poor girl ought never to marry anyone. She may any time fall back into her former condition."

It was the morning following this evening that

Philip received a note, delivered by Pierre, which a good deal surprised him. It was from Thomas Alvin, expressing regret at the manner in which he had received Philip, the day he had been so kind as to call. It told him, too, a fact Philip had already heard, that Miss Le Breton (by which name he, of course, called Eweretta) had made a complete recovery.

Thomas Alvin, in his new-born affection for his niece, had conceived the idea of giving her another chance to win back her lover by letting the young people meet again, and this letter was a preliminary move in the game.

As for the intimacy between Philip and Miss Lane, which everyone was saying was an engagement, Alvin did not trouble himself in the least. Philip belonged to Eweretta. If there was any stealing away of a lover, then Miss Lane was the thief. If Philip should once more love Eweretta—though he believed her to be Aimée—then much of the wrong inflicted upon the girl would be undone.

But Eweretta Alvin knew nothing of all this.

Eweretta's attitude after that interview with her uncle in which she had capitulated had been one of extreme reserve—on the one point, at least. Alvin could not understand her. The women he had known had loudly proclaimed their griefs. Eweretta herself had had more than one hysterical outbreak at the time when drugs were constantly given to her. But Eweretta without the drugs was a very different person.

Alvin had scarcely seen her up to the time of her father's death, and knew nothing of her natural characteristics. He concluded that as she was certainly not an Alvin, she must take after her mother's family. He had never even seen Eweretta's mother. But he had heard that she was a woman of great

refinement and reserve. He had heard, too, that knowing her husband's infidelity, she had never opened her lips upon the subject, but had quietly and silently died.

Alvin did not mean for Eweretta to follow her example. The kind look in the girl's eyes as she had spoken those memorable words which showed him what Divine forgiveness could mean had worked a miracle in Alvin. He was reclaimed to human feeling by being taught that he was a man still, recognized and treated as a man. For the first time he had felt that he was not despised, and his heart had opened in a tide of affection and generosity.

If Alvin failed to understand Eweretta, she was even more of a riddle to Mrs. Le Breton.

"I shall call you 'mother' now," Eweretta had said to her, after briefly explaining her changed conditions, "and I will try to be as a daughter to you."

Mrs. Le Breton's ideas of a daughter were, to begin with, full confidence. This Eweretta withheld.

Apparently the girl's one idea was to bury the past, and take her place in the household as if really the girl Aimée whom she personated. She evidently had no intention of brooding and moping. She asked her uncle for a piano, which was immediately purchased at Hermitage's in Robertson Street. She also accompanied both Mrs. Le Breton and her uncle on their excursions into Hastings, and showed an interest in her clothes. She was behaving in every way as a normal young woman.

But Mrs. Le Breton felt her own life very considerably brightened by the change.

So this is how it came about that "Miss Le Breton" was seen on the Parade, listening to the band.

CHAPTER XVIII

PHILIP SITS IN JUDGMENT

"PHILIP will get his book out before mine if my publishers don't look sharp," grumbled Mr. Burns to his sister.

Philip had ridden over on his hired mare Soda, and had had tea at Hawk's Nest, and ridden back directly afterwards.

"I wish Philip would not work so hard," said the mother anxiously. "He has had no holiday this summer."

"What said Bismarck?" replied Uncle Robert. "To youth I have but three words of counsel—Work, work, work!"

Mrs. Barrimore laughed girlishly. "Ah, Robert!" she said, "Bismarck also said, 'A good speaker must be somewhat of a poet, and cannot therefore adhere mathematically to the truth.' It is not good for youth to work without amusement to break it. Philip has no amusements. It can't be good for him."

"It is not," acknowledged Mr. Burns. "I observed to-day that Philip is putting on flesh. He will get stout if he does not take exercise."

"He rides," defended Mrs. Barrimore.

"Rides!" echoed her brother. "He ought to walk and play cricket and swim!"

"But his work takes it out of him. He is too tired for these things," objected the mother. "But he

ought to go to a play sometimes. We get very good companies down here."

"Bah!" answered Uncle Robert. "Stuffy theatres are no good. What Philip wants is open-air exercise. Look at me!"

Mrs. Barrimore did so, and laughed again softly.

"*You* are stout, you know," she told him.

"So I am," he acknowledged, "but I should become an elephant if I didn't exercise. 'Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed, that he is grown so great?' Annie, why don't you prevent me from eating potatoes! And Dan is coming back to-morrow to paint my portrait!"

"What time is Dan coming?" inquired Mrs. Barrimore.

"In time for dinner. I asked Philip to come."

"Did you know that Colonel Lane was coming?"

"No. But the more the merrier."

"But—" Mrs. Barrimore hesitated. "But you know Philip is always vexed to find Colonel Lane here." Her face flushed pinkly.

"If Philip don't like it he can lump it," said Uncle Robert curtly. "Philip is too masterful, too overbearing. He would like to regulate even me! I think, Annie, that you have been unkind to the Colonel."

Mrs. Barrimore's sweet mouth became tremulous. "I think, dear," she said, "that we agreed not to speak of that. Colonel Lane and I are very good friends—oh, yes, *very*. He does not think me unkind."

"I call it all tommy-rot," said Uncle Robert, "to spoil your life and that good fellow's, just because Philip has an objection to your remarriage."

"Do you know that Phyllis suggested that perhaps

Philip would take a fancy to Miss Le Breton?" she said, to change the subject.

"Oh! did she!" said Uncle Robert with contempt. "I don't think there is the slightest chance of such a thing. Philip is very satisfied with his condition. His work is more to him than any woman, even his mother!"

"*You* are unkind now," she said with as much displeasure in her voice as her gentle nature was capable of showing.

"No," he contradicted. "I am not unkind. I am as fond of the lad as a man can be, but I am not blind to his faults."

"But you do not realize his suffering," she protested.

"I realize that he has got over it," affirmed Uncle Robert. "It has become a sort of poetic regret—an interesting adjunct in his personality."

But Mrs. Barrimore shook her head, her eyes shining with love for that boy of hers, and with conviction that she understood him, which his Uncle Robert failed to do.

The person who really did understand Philip was Eweretta Alvin, for though she was mistaken in believing that he had consoled himself with Phyllis Lane, she had studied his face to some purpose. She realized that the dead can be forgotten, and that a love sworn to be eternal can end with a few shovelfuls of earth upon a coffin. She realized, too, that love could end so, even though two people were united in marriage. Love could pass away in life as well as in death.

It was this conviction that helped her more than anything else to rise above the blow she had received.

"Philip would have ceased to care in any

case," she told herself. "It is well that he thinks me dead."

She had been warned both by Mrs. Le Breton and by her uncle that she would probably encounter Philip, now that she was free to come and go.

She had smiled mystically.

"He will never have the least suspicion I am not Aimée," she had said. In her heart she said: "There is no love to penetrate the disguise."

She saw Philip nearly every day as he took his favorite stroll across the fields, passing the hedge of the White House garden.

Philip looked well and contented. He was, indeed, at this time, mightily pleased with his work, and that put him in excellent spirits.

The letter he had received from Thomas Alvin pleased him too, and being in such excellent humor, he generously made allowances for the rudeness of Mr. Alvin on the occasion of his visit, and answered the note in his own charming manner.

He had, however, no present intention of repeating the call he had made at the White House. The rough Colonial did not appeal to him, and Miss Le Breton, being restored to a normal condition, was not in need of kindnesses, which, moreover, might be mistaken. Philip considered himself very clever to have thought of this.

It was, of course, possible now that Miss Le Breton and the young man should meet, but Philip meant to avoid it if he could. He did not want to have the old sorrow awakened by her looks and her voice. Her voice, when he chanced to hear it from the garden, affected him more than her extraordinary likeness to Eweretta. Both girls had low-pitched, contralto voices, singularly sweet.

Philip had no desire to be haunted by ghosts.

Since coming to the bungalow he had communed much with himself, and one result of his communings had been the abandonment of his resolve to die a bachelor.

He had no notion of again falling in love. He had, he told himself, experienced one grand passion. He could never experience another. But he would marry, if he got on, a woman who had society tact and experience, a woman who could make his position by her *savoir faire*. He had come to realize that however big an author a man might be, a society wife was an essential to a big success. She could make him the *fashion*. His work was everything to him now, and he honestly believed that no living author wrote quite such perfect romances as he did.

In justice to Philip, the critics—those critics that count—prophesied a big future for him. He was still a very young man.

He was considerably relieved that his uncle's book would be by "Robert Burns," and not by "Barri-more." Had it been his father's brother instead of his mother's Philip would have regarded the publication of this volume of verse as nothing short of a catastrophe.

Philip did not want so inferior a production to be put down to him.

But Philip was fond of his uncle, and he had made big efforts to appear pleased that the book was coming out. Nevertheless, his real views did leak out in spite of him. In a fit of penitence for "hurting the poor old chap's feelings" Philip consented to leave work and dine at Hawk's Nest as requested.

Philip often had fits of penitence regarding his

treatment of both his uncle and his mother; nevertheless he had but the vaguest idea how much he sometimes hurt them both.

Of one thing Philip had an idea that had no vagueness at all about it, and that was Colonel Lane's opinion about it all.

Colonel Lane often regarded Philip with a cold, disapproving eye. Once he had said, after Philip had been putting his mother and his uncle right on several points in succession, "A bit of army discipline would do you good, young man."

Davis, the ex-soldier, who acted as servant to Philip, had also his ideas about his domineering, dictatorial (albeit kind) master, and had on one occasion confided to the saucepan he was scouring that it would improve Mr. Barrimore to be "kicked round the square" a bit.

Philip was not altogether to blame. His mother had always treated him as a demi-god from his infancy. Also she had made the great mistake of keeping him at home under a tutor when he ought to have been at a public school—an omission with which Philip in these days, did not fail to reproach his mother!

"The boy hasn't been thrashed, that's what's the matter with him," Uncle Robert would often observe. "Spare the rod and spoil the child! Why I don't think Philip ever so much as had a fight with another boy!"

These ideas of Uncle Robert's were little pleasing to the gentle but unwise mother.

Philip, in his wisdom, disapproved of them all!—his mother, his uncle, and Colonel Lane. But he was tolerant to them, he told himself, for "they had good intentions!"

CHAPTER XIX

COLONEL LANE GOES OFF GUARD

PHILIP BARRIMORE did not have to undergo the annoyance of sitting at table with the man who had dared to want to marry this young man's mother—not, at any rate, on the occasion of Dan Webster's arrival at Hawk's Nest.

Colonel Lane had sent round a letter to Mrs. Barrimore to apologize and to explain.

"MY DEAR FRIEND," it began, "the last of my old comrades—Colonel Henderson—is dying at Dulwich, and he has expressed a wish to see me. You will understand that I am going at once, and kindly forgive me for breaking my engagement with you to-night under the sorrowful circumstances. Poor Henderson has been on his back for years, and has characteristically hidden himself, being poor. Indeed, I had thought he must be dead! Now he has sent for me, and I shall remain with him, if he desires it, to the end.

"Will you, dear friend, be so sweet as to take Phyllis into your home till I return? She does not get on well with Mrs. Ransom—and—there are other reasons. With you, I shall feel sure my child will be safe."

The letter ended conventionally, but for all that to Mrs. Barrimore it was a love-letter.

"He trusts me—he flies to me always as a refuge," she told herself, and her kind eyes were bright with tears.

It did not occur to this simple, loving woman that there might be danger for Phyllis within the haven of her home.

Dan Webster with a shade over his eyes was one person; Dan Webster without the shade was very much another person! His eyes were blue as forget-me-nots—merry eyes, loving eyes, eyes which women raved about.

Dan himself was full of charm. He was possessed also of that rare virtue—gratitude.

He had never forgotten how sweet Phyllis had been to him in his blindness, and he had often longed to show her his gratitude in some way that she would understand. He was unfeignedly glad when Mr. Burns, who had met him at Hastings Station, told him that "little Phil" was come to stay at Hawk's Nest.

Dan had an idea that Colonel Lane was a little too much "down" on Phyllis. He was too strict for so high-spirited yet innocent a girl. "Phyllis is just a kiddie," Dan had once remarked to Mrs. Barrimore, "she means no harm."

And Mrs. Barrimore had thoroughly agreed with the young painter's view of the case.

But as Colonel Lane had entrusted Phyllis to the care of his "dear friend," she felt that she was on her honor to prevent Phyllis from flirting with Dan. Colonel Lane had known that Dan would be staying at Hawk's Nest, so he had shown great trust in Mrs. Barrimore when he had asked her to take his daughter into her home.

So it happened that while Mr. Burns was escorting

Dan from the station (Dan had insisted on walking as he wanted to "stretch his legs"), Mrs. Barrimore was reading a gentle lecture to her wilful young guest.

"You won't flirt with Dan, will you, dear?" she began nervously. "Your father would not like it, and now that he has trusted you by sending you here—don't you think—"

"What I think is that you are a dear darling!" exclaimed the girl impulsively, kissing the tame lecturer, "and you want to please father—oh! I know! and you are looking absolutely lovely!"

Mrs. Barrimore had blushed that beautiful pink at the girl's words.

"How do you do it?" asked Phyllis with a critical gaze. "Now I don't blush. I wish I could! I get a savage red when dad scolds me, and that is the nearest to blushing I can get at. But don't worry! I will be demure and well-behaved for your sweet sake. It will be hard, you know, for I do so like a bit of fun. There isn't a great deal of fun at home, you know!" she added wistfully.

Annie Barrimore laughed brightly and naturally. "Come! Come!" she ejaculated. "You do get a good deal of fun out of life!"

"You wouldn't think so if you knew everything."

"What is there to know, then?" inquired the elder woman. She remembered painfully that Colonel Lane had suspected Phyllis of hiding something.

"There are things even older people can't understand," answered Phyllis enigmatically.

There was a strained silence, followed happily by the voices of Uncle Robert and Dan in the garden.

"One always hears Robert a mile off," remarked Mrs. Barrimore. "Come, we must welcome Dan."

The two women found Philip in the entrance hall.

Philip was disposed to be very pleasant to-night. He embraced his mother with more than usual affection, and greeted Phyllis with a compliment on her frock, which greatly gratified that young woman, as Philip so rarely said "nice things."

"You will scarcely believe it," said Philip as he hung up his hat, "but I drove in in Thomas Alvin's trap. He was passing the bungalow, and I was in the garden. He spoke quite affably, and I chanced to say I was going into Hastings when he offered me a seat in his trap, which I accepted. I did not want to ride in—in fact, Soda has got something wrong with her hock. I was going to cycle over, and I hate cycling."

"How nice of Mr. Alvin!" said Mrs. Barrimore. "But where are your uncle and Dan?"

"Just behind," said Philip. "I left them talking to some parson at the gate. I did not know him, and I came in for fear of an introduction. I never hit it off with parsons somehow!"

During dinner Philip astonished everyone by speaking freely of the Alvins: speaking as if he had never been so intimately, so tragically near to them. Mrs. Barrimore admired what she thought his splendid self-control. Dan was hurt at what he considered the man's callousness. Uncle Robert said to himself: "I was right. The wound is healed." Phyllis was too much interested in watching Dan to attend to Philip's remarks.

"I think," said Philip, in his "laying-down-the-law" tone, "that Alvin ought to leave the neighbor-

hood now Miss Le Breton has recovered her reason, and give her a chance. Here everyone knows of her former condition."

"I quite agree with you, dear Philip," said his mother. (When did she not agree with dear Philip?) "No one will call on them, because Miss Le Breton is so beautiful, and they would be afraid for their sons. The poor girl should scarcely marry."

"She is beautiful," rejoined Philip critically, "but not necessarily a danger on that account. Men like to toy with a beautiful woman, but those who are sensible think twice about marrying them. For my part, I think if ever I chose to marry, it would not be a beautiful woman I should make my wife."

"How bravely he hides his wound!" thought Mrs. Barrimore.

"Old Alvin is not the brute I imagined," went on Philip to the table generally. "He talked to me as we drove along, almost entirely of Miss Le Breton. He is profoundly anxious about her future. He seemed very fond of her, I thought. After all, those two women have no claim on him whatever. He can't be a bad sort to voluntarily burden himself with them."

"I entirely disagree with you on that point, Philip," broke out Uncle Robert. "Both women had a natural claim on the money Thomas Alvin has become possessed of. I am glad Alvin had the grace to see it."

"The odd thing is," went on Philip, ignoring somewhat impolitely his uncle's observation. "The odd thing is, that Miss Le Breton is fond of this uncouth Colonial—I gathered that."

"Poor girl!" put in Dan, "she has no sweetheart to be fond of, or has lost him."

"Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on a," said Philip lightly.

Philip's tone, rather than the words themselves, was somewhat of a shock to his hearers. Everyone remembered the grave in the Canadian prairie. Would Philip, too, philosophically having lost what he had loved, console himself by loving what he had?

Philip had certainly changed a good deal from the boy who had rushed off to the North-West broken-hearted, to visit a little mound of earth near Qu'Appelle, and had come back announcing that he should for ever remain a bachelor. He was not melancholy now, he was quite evidently in excellent spirits. Even the sight of the girl at the White House, who was, as he himself said, the living image of the lost Eweretta, failed to fan the old flame.

He spoke of Miss Le Breton quite freely.

Turning to Dan he said: "You should get a sight of Miss Le Breton. Perhaps Alvin could give you a commission to paint her. She is wonderful."

"What is she like?" inquired Dan.

Philip considered.

"Black hair, blue eyes—that often look dark," he said, and paused.

"She has wonderful eyes, heavily-fringed," he went on. "Her skin is pale and clear."

Suddenly he broke off, and applied himself to his dinner.

Perhaps the face he had called up affected him, after all.

Uncle Robert caught his sister's eye. She was looking towards him with a certain triumph.

She knew quite well that her brother had been

thinking Philip callous, and she was not sorry that a sudden betrayal of feeling on the boy's part had undeceived his uncle.

"I must begin your portrait to-morrow, Mr. Burns," Dan said, to fill an awkward silence.

"The sooner the better, my boy!" exclaimed Uncle Robert. "You ought to get my picture in the New Gallery next year, as you did old Lord What's-his-name's this year."

Dan laughed. "I was lucky," he said.

Phyllis was behaving with great discretion. She certainly looked at Dan a good deal, but none of her glances had the usual coquetry, and Dan, who had also looked at her, never liked her so much as during this hour.

He thought about her as a sort of under-current of contemplation while he talked of other things. He remembered her little coquettish ways of the past, and saw, or fancied he saw, them in a truer, clearer light. She had been sweet to him and made much of him and flattered him because he had been under a cloud. It had not been, as he had then imagined, wilful flirting—wilful flirting which to him had nevertheless been very pleasant at the time.

Now that he was himself, Phyllis had become the demure, modest, even shy maiden, which to him was infinitely more attractive.

"How did I behave, darling?" Phyllis demanded of Mrs. Barrimore when they were alone in the drawing-room waiting for the men to join them.

"Beautifully, dear!" said her mentor with enthusiasm.

During the walk to Gissing (Philip, to everyone's amazement, had elected to walk back to the bungalow!), he pondered over the demure behavior of

Phyllis, and was much exercised as to the motive of this transformation.

"She never attempted to flirt once," he mentally commented. "Perhaps she is learning some common sense at last."

CHAPTER XX

“SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR!”

IN what the Kingdom of Heaven consists there are wide and varied opinions, but it is reserved to those who have retained, or attained, the heart of a little child to see it.

Eweretta Alvin, despite her twenty-one years, had still the heart of a little child. Her up-bringing had something to do with this.

As a small child, under the care of a singularly pure-minded mother, she had dwelt in a simple prairie home, and the miles and miles of landscape stretching out before her childish eyes had filled her with veneration. She had even then, though she could not have expressed it, been awed by the smallness of herself and the stupendous greatness of the Creator. This feeling had been fostered later on in the peaceful convent school at Montreal, where the gentle Sisters of the Sacred Heart had recognized that Eweretta Alvin was an unusually “spiritual” child.

People outside the convent had called Eweretta foolishly optimistic. Whatever happened, she would declare, had good as its ultimate result. Her mother’s death, which had been a great sorrow, had been far less of an anguish than the knowledge of her father’s sin. Of the loss of her mother, she had said: “She is in Heaven and happy.” Of her father, she had said to herself: “God will make him repent. He has a good heart; God will see to it.”

Of the wrong done her by her Uncle Thomas, she told herself: "God permitted it that I might help a man who never had a chance."

Of the loss of her lover, she told herself that God had mercifully let her find out in time that his love was a reed on which she could not lean.

Eweretta had been brought up in her mother's religion, which was also that of Mrs. Le Breton. Both these women were of French Canadian stock, and naturally Roman Catholics.

Now that Eweretta was allowed her freedom, she went to church again, and Mrs. Le Breton went too. It was a long journey for them to "St. Mary, Star of the Sea," but that was of little moment to these two women. They had both lived in the prairie where a monthly Mass had alone been possible, as the little church both had attended had been served by a priest who had to travel far. They themselves had covered twenty miles to reach it.

It so chanced that Dan Webster was a Roman Catholic, so he, too, when at Hastings, went to "St. Mary, Star of the Sea," which is situated in the High Street of the Old Town.

On the first Sunday after Dan had come to Hawk's Nest, he went to the eight-o'clock Mass, and immediately in front of him sat Mrs. Le Breton and Eweretta.

Dan, who had a keen eye for beauty, was filled with an emotion at sight of this girl, which made him completely forget himself—and the Mass.

He never took his eyes from the girl, lest he should lose the sight of the exquisite profile which a chance movement of Eweretta's gave him. He was quite certain, from the slight description Philip Barrimore had given of her, that this was Miss Le Breton.

It was with a sense of downright good luck that

he noticed that one of them had left her prayer-book behind, when the two women left their seat.

He could easily have followed them and restored the book before they had left the church. But Dan had no such intention.

He waited till everyone had gone, then he pounced upon the prayer-book, and opened it, and saw therein "Andrée Le Breton." It was evidently the property of the elder woman. The other—the beautiful Madonna-like girl—was then, Aimée.

Dan made up his mind at once. He would go over to Gissing in the afternoon, and leave the book at the White House.

He confided a secret to Mrs. Barrimore when he found her alone on his return. Somehow Mrs. Barrimore was a woman in whom men easily confide. Colonel Lane had once described her grey eyes as "wells of sympathy."

First of all, Dan told her that he had seen Miss Le Breton at "St. Mary, Star of the Sea."

Then came the secret.

"You know, Mrs. Barrimore," he began, with a certain shyness of manner, "it was when my eyes went wrong I vowed that, if they got well, I would paint a picture of 'Our Lady' for the little church where I went as a boy, and that it should be my thank-offering. To-day, when I saw the face of Miss Le Breton, I knew that she was the model I wanted. I *must* paint her. Oh, Mrs. Barrimore, the love and sorrow—yet *peace*, in those wonderful eyes of hers! Well, fortune favored me. Mrs. Le Breton left her prayer-book behind her. Here it is! I am going to take it to her this afternoon, and I hope they will ask me to go in. If they do, I shall try to make myself charming."

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Barrimore, "you will not need to try to be charming; you need only be yourself!"

"You darling!" cried the impulsive boy. "I want to kiss you for that!"

Mrs. Barrimore held up her face. "You may have your kiss, Dan! You are almost like another son!"

When breakfast was over, Mrs. Barrimore, Mr. Burns and Phyllis went to Blacklands Church, and Dan passed the time smoking in a wicker chair on the terrace, and in thinking of the girl he hoped to paint.

After luncheon he dressed himself with some care, and started to walk to Gissing.

To reach the White House, Dan had to pass Philip's bungalow.

Philip was lying in his hammock in the verandah, consuming cigarettes.

Hearing brisk footsteps, he leaned up and saw Dan. Then he sprang out of the hammock and ran down the garden-path.

Dan was waiting at the gate.

"Can't you open it?" inquired Philip.

"I'll come in later," explained Dan. "I am going to deliver some lost property at the White House."

"Wait a minute and I will come too," said Philip. "Old Alvin gave me a lift the other day. I had been intending to call."

A shade—only a shade of disappointment crossed Dan's sunny face for a moment. He had wanted to make the very most of this opportunity, and he knew from experience that other men had but a small "show in" when Philip was present.

"They are all in the garden," Philip said, as the two men walked towards the White House. "Perhaps they will offer us tea."

Nearing a spot where the little wood became visible, Dan remarked on its being wired in.

"Does Mr. Alvin keep some colonial pets in there?" he asked.

"I am curious to know myself," replied Philip. "Alvin has constructed a high wall round a clearing inside. This much I know. He is a funny old fellow. He did most of the work at night."

Thomas Alvin received the guests with a show of genuine friendliness. He had seen them coming, and had walked to the garden gate to meet them.

"Come in," he said cordially to Philip, and then glanced at Dan.

"This is Mr. Webster, the painter, of whom I think you have heard," said Philip. "He has brought some lost property of Mrs. Le Breton's."

Alvin shook hands with Dan, and led the way to a shady spot in the garden, where Mrs. Le Breton and Eweretta were sitting.

Eweretta's face turned a shade paler as Philip greeted her. He could not but observe this, but thought it only natural that "Aimée Le Breton" should be shy and nervous.

Dan, who had given the prayer-book to Mrs. Le Breton, fell into conversation with her, so Philip began to talk to Eweretta.

"You must find England a great change from Canada, Miss Le Breton," he said, as he took the chair Alvin had purposely placed for him near Eweretta.

"Yes," she replied; "but this place is very beautiful."

How startlingly like her voice was to her sister's, thought Philip. It awoke a tender memory, not deep enough to be actual pain, but still tender.

"It is rather lonely, though, out here," went on

Philip. "I mean for you. I chose it on account of the solitude. I can work better away from people."

"You are writing a new book, are you not?" asked Eweretta.

"Yes, I am nearing the end," he answered. "I have grown so fond of one or two of my puppets that I shall grieve to say good-bye."

"I suppose the characters in stories do become very real to an author," she said.

"Very real indeed," he answered. "More real sometimes than people of flesh and blood."

"I can understand that," she rejoined. "They are all your own, and you can sift them at your will."

Philip was amazed that Aimée Le Breton, whom he had always understood to be uneducated, could talk in this way.

He caught himself staring at her and instantly looked away.

"And this book of yours," she hazarded. "What is it about? Or perhaps you would rather not talk about it?"

"Ah, Miss Le Breton, do not so tempt me! Was there ever yet an author who was not willing—too willing to talk of his books? My book is a love story, but possibly some readers will rebel against the doctrines on love therein put forth. Do you believe that love is eternal, Miss Le Breton? I mean, of course, the love of a man for a maid, or a maid for a man. The great fact of Love must be eternal; the love that is not of the earth earthy."

He spoke eagerly and watched to see the effect of his words.

Her answer came in her slow, full contralto.

"No, I cannot think all human love eternal," she said.

"And perhaps it is best so," he rejoined. "For instance, when a man is young he sometimes loves—or thinks he loves—the woman who would not in the least suit him as a life-companion. You would not think it best that that love should be eternal, would you, Miss Le Breton? The man in my book spoils his life because he fell in love too young, and with the wrong woman. I am boring you, Miss Le Breton?"

"No, I am much—oh, very much interested," she assured him.

"Well, my hero found out the mistake that he had made."

"I hope it was in time to prevent the marriage?" put in Eweretta. "The real tragedy would have been their marriage."

"How well you realize?" he exclaimed admiringly. "Really I don't often find anyone to understand as you do. But I am a terrible egotist. Let us talk of something else. What interests you chiefly?"

"Oh, many things—everything almost," she made answer.

"How contented you must be!" he said musingly.

"Yes, I am content," she answered.

"I am, too," Philip told her, "for I have passed my romantic period, when I thought youthful sorrows could be everlasting. You know, Miss Le Breton, the young always think sorrow eternal. I have grown old in a few months, and have passed from one stage of experience to another at express speed. It is a curious feeling to look back over a few months, and to feel them to be years."

He paused, and she regarded him with strange intentness.

"I understand that too," she said at last.

Dan, who had been growing impatient to have a chance to speak with his beautiful Madonna, deliberately interrupted Philip and Eweretta at this point.

"You like Hastings, I hope, Miss Le Breton? Your mother and I have been lauding it so well that I think the town ought to give us a testimonial."

"It is lovely," said Eweretta. "There is so fine a sea and such wonderful country too. I think the view from the West Hill quite wonderful. It reminds me a little of Quebec. Were you ever in Canada, Mr. Webster?"

"No, to my loss," acknowledged Dan. "But I mean to see it one day. I mean to go everywhere. A nice statement for an impecunious painter to make, you will say! But I am an optimistic beggar, and I have wonderful castles in Spain."

Mattie brought out tea at this point and conversation became general.

Alvin was in good spirits. Evidently Barrimore had been getting on very well with Eweretta.

But how incredible it seemed that he should not recognize her!

Yet he had always known that the half-sisters were like as twins, and he was sure that his old love was dead. *An accepted fact wants some upsetting!*

But how romantic it would be if Philip should again fall in love with Eweretta, believing her to be Aimée!

When the young men rose to go, Alvin begged them to repeat their visit, which they promised to do at an early date.

"I figure that we shall be friends," he added.

On the way back to the bungalow Philip said:

"It is a most amazing thing, Dan, that Aimée Le

Breton should have so completely recovered her reason. It was quite uncanny to hear her talk. 'Pon my word, at times I felt I must be hearing her dead sister speak! But she is, after all, very different from Eweretta. Eweretta was joyous as a child. I cannot imagine Aimée Le Breton as joyous at any time. She does not seem unhappy; on the contrary, she is content. But she struck me as a woman incapable of *joy*."

CHAPTER XXI

TWO MEN DISCUSS A WOMAN

DAN WEBSTER stayed on at the bungalow till the evening shadows gathered, and during the whole time Miss Le Breton had formed the subject of conversation, which finally developed into argument.

Philip, who was conscious of having got a little heated, and who was anxious to make amends, volunteered to walk as far as Ore with Dan.

But as they walked the old topic still occupied them.

"You have had a lot to say in your capacity of novelist, Philip," said Dan. "You hold that you see through a character because of your story-telling gift. As a matter of fact, you don't get outside yourself enough to be able to form a just estimate of character. Now I, as a painter of portraits, am a bit of a character reader. A really great portrait-painter puts a man's naked soul upon the canvas. Such portraits are a revelation of the kind one expects on the Judgment Day."

"Oh, I know all about that," answered Philip testily. (Most people wasted their time, and his, by telling him things he knew all about.)

"But let me finish," persisted Dan. "You, with a novelist's insight, say that you believe Miss Le Breton incapable of *joy*. Now I, with my painter's insight, should say that Miss Le Breton has known

both great joy and great sorrow. There is in her face the sweetness that renunciation alone gives. Ah! when I get my chance, I will put on canvas what I see in that woman's face!"

"Exactly," said Philip bitinglly; "*what you see*, but not necessarily *what is there*. The accident of beauty makes Miss Le Breton's face what it is. Think, man! that girl until quite recently was not quite sane. The form the disease took in her was that of an *undeveloped* brain (so I have always understood). This means that the girl has had no history; therefore, what you say you see in her face cannot be there."

Dan smiled. "But I see it," he answered.

"Well, Dan, I am an egotistical aggravating fellow, and I daresay you have more insight than I have. I am really a good deal puzzled about Aimée Le Breton. She talked like a woman who had both education and intellect to-day. I wonder if her mother's melancholy preyed upon her, and reflected itself in a curious way, so as to mislead people in her earlier days? You know—or perhaps you don't know—that in the prairie doctors' opinions are but rarely asked or obtained. It may be that in new and better surroundings the girl has awakened to her real self. But here we are at Ore, so good-bye, and don't go away with hard thoughts of me for my disagreeable didacticism. I am a disagreeable beast, but I love you well!"

Dan wrung his friend's hand as he said whimsically: "I think, old man, I'll set about getting the beam out of my own eye!"

It was Phyllis Lane who greeted Dan when he reached Hawk's Nest.

"Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Burns have gone for a

walk on the sea-front," she explained. "I stayed to finish 'Uther and Igraine'—*and* to see you."

"How nice of you!" exclaimed Dan, much flattered, for Phyllis had shown no coquetry at all in these golden days when sight had come back.

"I want to know so much what you think of Miss Le Breton," went on Phyllis.

The words acted as a cold douche after Dan's elation. Phyllis was not anxious to see him (for himself) at all. She wanted to satisfy her curiosity about Miss Le Breton. A swift thought crossed Dan's mind. Could it be possible that Phyllis's visits to the bungalow, of which he had heard, were not platonic after all? Could it be that she was in love with the egotist at Gissing, and was fearful lest that young man should come to be enamored of Aimée Le Breton?

Dan was not inclined to agree with Mrs. Barrimore regarding the extreme frankness of Colonel Lane's attractive little daughter. But he liked her genuinely, and it had gratified him that she had said she had waited to see him, till she gave her reason.

"Won't you take cold in that thin blouse, Miss Lane?" was Dan's next remark.

Phyllis had met Dan at the gate of the carriage drive, and they had paced slowly towards the house as they talked.

"I never take cold," asserted Phyllis, "but I will go in and get my coat and hat, and we can go a little way to meet Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Burns if you like—not, of course, if you are tired after walking from Gissing."

Dan put his big shoulders back and asked if he looked like a creature that tired.

In the twilight that had gathered Dan looked a giant to little Phyllis.

"I like big, strong men," Phyllis remarked critically.

"Do you?" came in Uncle Robert's stentorian voice from the road. "You ought to like *me*, then!"

"So I do," cried Phyllis, running lightly to the gate.

"Very nice and very proper of you, my dear," rejoined Uncle Robert. "So you are home first, Dan? Eh, what? We thought Philip would keep you late. Annie and I have been listening to the Socialists holding forth on the beach. There is something in what they say too."

"Where do they hold forth?" inquired Dan.

"By the two *Albertines*. You ought to go and hear them. Carlye called theirs 'the dismal science,' didn't he? Ah! that was about the Nigger question. He said, too: 'A Burns is infinitely better educated than a Byron.' Ha! ha!"

"Mr. Burns," broke out Dan, "you ought to be fined a bottle of champagne every time you make a quotation."

"Then I fear there would be a slump in the wine trade—no, I mean, someone would make a corner in champagne," said Uncle Robert. "But let us join the fair ladies. See! they have gone in, and the inner man calleth for provender."

Supper took the place of dinner on Sundays at Hawk's Nest, and it was during this meal that Phyllis heard what Dan thought of Miss Le Breton.

Dan, once upon the subject, talked so volubly, that Uncle Robert could not get in a single quotation. Aimée Le Breton's expression, to say nothing of her perfection of line, molding and color, was something to dream of. "'Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,'" Dan quoted, whereupon Uncle Robert exclaimed: "You are usurping my throne," and everyone laughed except Phyllis.

To Phyllis this praise of Aimée Le Breton was a pang, the reason for which she was then far from guessing.

"Philip talked to her a lot," said Dan. "I envied him."

"What! did Philip go?" asked Mrs. Barrimore. "Poor Philip! what a stoic he is! Why should he subject himself to the occasion of such sorrowful memories?"

"Philip seemed to like talking to her," Dan assured Mrs. Barrimore. "He quite came out, and discussed his books."

"He always does," affirmed Uncle Robert, upon which he received a very reproachful look from his sister.

"Isn't it natural that the boy should like to talk about his books?" she asked. "You like to talk about yours."

"Mine will be out soon," said Uncle Robert, bursting with pride. "You shall have a copy, Dan. I shall buy up a whole lot to encourage the publishers. I am anxious to see what the *Athenæum* and the *Saturday* will have to say about it. I showed one or two of the poems to Philip, and he did not seem appreciative. These fellows who write fiction only don't seem to care about poetry. Now I am different. I like to write poetry, but I like to read everything—even the modern novel—though I confess to getting more pleasure out of the Elizabethan writers than out of the most modern men. Fill up your glass, Dan!

*'Wine whets the wit, improves its native force,
And gives a pleasant flavor to discourse.'*

Pomfret wrote that. He knew a good deal of truth for a parson—I beg your pardon, Annie! you don't like that kind of remark, I know."

Mrs. Barrimore rose. "Phyllis and I will leave you to 'whet your wits,'" she said with a smile.

"Poor Dan!" exclaimed Uncle Robert. "I'll wager he is sick of my gift of the gab and would rather go with you and Phyllis."

"No, no!" Dan contradicted. "Go on talking. I like it, and, more than that, I am busy getting your portrait."

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Uncle Robert, not understanding.

"It is not when you sit to me that I take your portrait," observed Dan enigmatically. "I learn up your face when you are your natural self, talking as now. I do not put on canvas the expression you give me when you sit to me."

"Ah, I see!" broke in Uncle Robert. "'Nature is Art's handmaid,' and Dryden says: 'For Art may err, but Nature cannot miss.' You paint portraits, Dan, not pictures that might be anybody almost. You will make a big name one day, young man. But take care of those precious eyes of yours."

"I mean to," said Dan. "Do you know, Mr. Burns, I was feeling absolutely suicidal when you sent for me to come here to recruit. The folks at home, as you know, had always resented my taking to the brush. It was natural, perhaps, for I am the man of the family, my father being gone. But an old aunt who has lived with us ever since I can remember, and who is a regular wet blanket—not to say more—told me that it was a judgment on me that my eyes went wrong. My sister Isabel, too, who is a teacher at the James Allen School at Dulwich, and who is really fond of me, had such a fit of the blues over me that I got doubly depressed. My mother, as you know, is a *malade imaginaire*, so really I began, as

I said, to feel quite suicidal. Then I came here and you all cheered me up. I began to hope immediately I set foot in Hawk's Nest."

"You cheered us up, old man," said Uncle Robert warmly. "And while I think of it, your sister might like to spend her holiday at Hastings, and it would be a charity to Annie, who has only an old fogey like me in the house since Philip went away. No, Dan! don't begin any thanking rot! It would be a favor to us, not to your sister. We have never seen her, but if you are a fair sample, the more we see of your family the better."

"You should invite Aunt Lizzie," said Dan, laughing. "You wouldn't want any more of our family after that! Aunt Lizzie is one of the most dismal and most aggravating creatures on earth, I should think. I never remember seeing her smile. She is plain—she is not responsible for that. She is plain of speech—for that she is responsible. She never forgave my mother for marrying a Catholic, even though my mother did not change her religion. She was outraged, too, that I as a boy should be brought up in my father's faith, though Isabel was brought up in our mother's. When poor old Father Doughty calls at the house, Aunt Lizzie retires to her bed-chamber. Yet she is really one of the most unselfish people in the world."

"I don't think we will invite your Aune Lizzie," said Mr. Burns with decision.

CHAPTER XXII

ALVIN TRIES ARTFULLY TO BRING OLD LOVERS TOGETHER

AFTER Philip Barrimore and Dan Webster had quitted the garden at the White House, Mrs. Le Breton slipped her arm through Eweretta's and led her to a sequestered spot, where a wooden seat was hidden by thick, tall bushes.

"My darling!" she whispered. "How hard for you! how cruelly hard!" Tears were in the elder woman's eyes.

Eweretta turned her beautiful face towards her companion. Her dark blue eyes had no tears in them.

"Mother," she said (she always called Mrs. Le Breton "mother" now), "you must not pity me. I am fortunate. I saw to-day how completely I had gone out of Philip Barrimore's life. If we had *married*, and this had happened, then, indeed, you might have pitied me! No, we are each destined to some good life-work. I have found mine. I can be a comfort to you and to Uncle Thomas. I have thought much of you both lately. Your life has been a tragedy, dear mother, and that of Uncle Thomas scarcely less so. He has lived under an imagined curse, which became real, because he and everyone else believed in it. I myself have escaped a real tragedy, the tragedy of finding out that I had married

a man whose love is not lasting. I do not blame Philip. No one ought to be blamed for ceasing to love. Love's coming and going is independent of our will."

"But, dearest," said Mrs. Le Breton, "do *you* still love Philip?"

"The Philip I loved is dead," she answered a little mournfully. "This Philip I can meet without pain from to-day."

Mrs. Le Breton thought silently for a few moments, during which time she held one of Eweretta's soft hands between her own, which were hardened and knotted from the rough work she had done in Canada, mending shoes.

At last she said: "You ought to have friends of your own age, dear. It is not right that you should be shut up with two middle-aged people. We ought to move away somewhere where nothing is known about us, to give you a chance."

Eweretta's brows were suddenly drawn together, as if she were in pain. "No—never think of it," she pleaded. "I love the White House and its solitude. I could not make friends with girls of my own age. I have grown so old. But I am happy. Never think I am not happy!"

While the two women talked together, Thomas Alvin was within the house, writing a letter. Every now and then he smiled. What a reparation it would be for the wrong he had done his niece, if by his help the lovers became reunited.

Philip had appeared to get on so well with "Miss Le Breton." In his hopefulness, Alvin quite lost sight of the fact that the supposed mental taint might prove an insurmountable obstacle to the girl's marriage with anyone. Knowing as he did that

Eweretta was both intellectual and well educated, he saw no reason why she should not be a good wife for anyone. But to other people Eweretta was "Aimée Le Breton," and he, Alvin, had spread the report of her being mentally deficient. This report had gained weight by the appearance of the girl herself; for while under the constant influence of drugs she had not appeared herself. Also, she had had wild, hysterical moods from the same cause, when she would sing wild, mournful songs which had been heard and commented upon. The sudden restoration to a normal condition might be looked upon with suspicion by the Gissing and Hastings folk.

Alvin was writing a note, which he meant to leave at the bungalow. He chuckled over the cleverness which had given him the idea.

He reminded Philip that he had expressed a wish to be of use to the half-sister of Eweretta, and suggested that as Aimée had seemed to be so interested in the new novel, Philip should read her a little of it at any time when he had leisure. "If you and your friend Mr. Webster would give us the pleasure of your company some night at dinner—any night of your own choosing—we should think it very kind of you," Alvin wrote. "I have not seen Aimée so interested before, as she was in talking with you."

Having finished the letter, Alvin took it to the bungalow, and gave it to Davis, for Philip was at that time on his way to Ore with Dan.

In this way Alvin tried to play Providence, and to bring together two young people who no longer desired each other.

Philip, on his return to the bungalow, was highly flattered by the request that he should read some of

his new book aloud. He had been longing to try the effect of it on someone.

In consequence, the next morning, Soda's hock being now all right, he rode over to Hawk's Nest to tell Dan of the invitation, and to get him to fix a date for them to accept it.

He found that his mother and Phyllis had gone into Robertson Street to do some shopping, and Dan was at work on Uncle Robert's portrait.

Dan threw down his brushes in an ecstasy of delight when he heard the news.

"Of course I will go!" he cried. "What do *you* think! The chance of my lifetime! I shall get Miss Le Breton for my Madonna yet!"

Uncle Robert got up and stretched himself, yawning noisily.

"Of course you will paint her!" he said to Dan, "and get a thumping sum for the work too. Old Alvin is as rich as a Jew."

"I would not take one penny for *that* picture," affirmed Dan. "Mrs. Barrimore knows why; and the picture is to be mine, if, indeed, Miss Le Breton will consent to sit to me. Oh, why should I make a secret of it? I want to give it to a church."

"I understand," said Uncle Robert, who really did not understand at all.

But Philip understood, and, oddly enough, sympathized.

"I'll work it for you," he said to Dan. "Old Alvin seems to have taken a fancy to me. Would Wednesday evening suit you to dine at the White House? You could sleep at the bungalow, you know. There is a spare room."

"Delighted, old man!" exclaimed Dan. "Are we to dress?"

"Oh, no, I think not," said Philip. "You see, Alvin is a rough and ready Colonial. I doubt if he has ever possessed a dress-suit. His brother was quite different. He liked to pose as the fine gentleman."

How easily Philip seemed able to allude to that past! To Uncle Robert there was something nauseating in the fact. If his wound were healed, he at least need not advertise the fact quite so much. Uncle Robert did not take Mrs. Barrimore's view of the case. She believed Philip talked as he did to hide his wound. But the uncle remembered that at the time of Eweretta's supposed death Philip had shouted his grief from the house-tops. He had rushed off to Canada to see the grave, and had talked loudly about the monastic life he should henceforth lead.

Sudden changes of front are usually resented by the onlooker.

If Mrs. Barrimore took a too affectionate and prejudiced view of Philip's actions, Mr. Burns was, without intending it, a little unjust.

Philip had felt the death of his sweetheart acutely, and if he had more quickly than seemed altogether decent reconciled himself to the inevitable, it was surely a less selfish course than to have continued to "shout his grief from the house-tops."

If the dead past could not bury its dead, life would be impossible.

The gardener had taken Soda round to the stables. There were stables at Hawk's Nest, though no horses were kept. Mr. Burns preferred to hire when they needed to drive.

Philip would, of course, remain to luncheon.

Mrs. Barrimore and Phyllis, returning from their shopping expedition, saw the marks of the horse's feet on the gravel, and both cried simultaneously:

"Philip is here!"

Philip saw his mother from the window and came out to meet her. She was radiant, till her son spoiled it all by saying: "Why, mother! Have you borrowed a hat and frock from Phyllis?"

He spoke banteringly, but all the same, the underlying displeasure in his voice was sufficiently apparent.

Tears sprang to Mrs. Barrimore's eyes, but she squeezed them back and smiled bravely.

"Oh, this surely is not too youthful a costume," she asserted.

Philip eyed her over.

The light grey coat and skirt were plain enough, but the dainty white waistcoat and muslin chemisette offended Philip. The trim neatness of the fit gave him the idea of a tightly-laced corset underneath. No woman who was the mother of a grown-up son ought to have a figure like that!

The black hat—neither large nor small—with its chiffon trimmings, could not well be condemned. But the angle at which it was pinned on the bright hair was distinctly too coquettish.

"Your hat has got on one side," Philip remarked.

"Has it?" exclaimed Mrs. Barrimore, putting up her well-gloved hands to feel it. "I think not."

"Don't you believe him!" cried Phyllis. "It is quite right. Philip, you are simply horrid! and you have a coffee stain on your shirt-front."

Philip flushed angrily. Phyllis had touched him "on the raw." He was most particular about the appearance of his linen, and he had discovered with no little annoyance this particular coffee-stain since his arrival at Hawk's Nest.

"Never mind, Philip," said Mrs. Barrimore sooth-

ingly. "You have left some shirts here and can change."

Philip had not remembered this fortunate circumstance, and rushed off at once to his old room, which was at present occupied by Dan.

"There is a letter from Colonel Lane for you, Annie," Uncle Robert called from the doorstep.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LETTER

"MY DEAR MRS. BARRIMORE," Colonel Lane's letter began, "I may remain here some time. Poor Henderson has rallied for the moment, but he seems to find my companionship a comfort, so I shall stay. I know my dear friends at Hawk's Nest will look after Phyllis.

"To me it is indescribably sad to see a brave soldier on his back, in a home such as this. He has nothing beyond his half-pay, and illness is expensive. He has been an invalid for six years now, unable even to walk without assistance at the best of times. He has two boys at Dulwich College. Mrs. Henderson, poor soul! is a helpless sort of woman, and can neither control the boys nor the house, though I am sure she does her best, according to her lights. She goes to early celebration every morning, wet or fine, but I think she would be serving God better if she stayed at home, and saw that the awful little maid-of-all-work did not burn poor Henderson's toast.

"She worries poor Henderson by reading prayers to him in a voice like a corncrake's every morning and evening. Occasionally Henderson rebels, using regrettable language.

"The house is one of a row, in a road called a 'Grove,' because a few trees grow on each side of it. There is a patch of front garden, and a larger patch behind. Henderson's boys have laid his particular patch waste—the one at the back, I mean—

and unfortunately that is all Henderson has to look at from his window. He has a kind of back-parlor allotted to him. He sleeps there (when he does sleep!) and lies there all day.

"Piano-organs run riot.

"Oh, if only I had known earlier, when it would have been possible to remove my poor friend to my house for a change!

"They came here, it seems, to get the boys educated at Dulwich College. But East Dulwich is one of the most depressing places I ever saw.

"Henderson and I yarn about Army matters—that is, I yarn, and he puts in something now and then. But he seems cheered, and forgets his pain while we travel over old roads after this fashion.

"Really this house makes me ashamed of myself for being so discontented with my own. I find mine luxurious by contrast. Mrs. Ransom does keep it clean, too!

"Here the boys have played the deuce with everything. Even the banister rails are broken. The handles are off most of the doors, and the carpet in the 'front parlor,' where the boys take their meals and do their 'home-work,' has large burns in it from their experiments with fireworks.

"They are not bad boys by any means. They are a handsome pair, and full of life and spirits. They are simply uncontrolled, that is all. I confiscated a revolver from one of them to-day.

"Poor Mrs. Henderson remonstrates, and the boys laugh. She retires to darn socks and sniff. (She has a habit of sniffing which irritates Henderson.) Really to me it is infinitely sad to look at her, and to remember what a pretty girl she was when Henderson married her. She had such a bright pair of eyes in

those days and roses in her cheeks. Now she is plain—very plain. Her greying hair is thin, and her eyes dull. Her face is sallow.

“As I write I think of another woman, who is not so much younger than Mrs. Henderson, and yet is as fresh and flower-like as a girl, and I think it would break my heart if I saw her fade and become what my poor friend’s wife is. Life is a great mystery. Why should some suffer so much more than others?

“This is a dismal letter, but you always let me talk to you of all in my mind, don’t you? I hope that Phyllis does not give you any anxiety. I told you that she had been writing to Captain Arbuthnot? I meant to write to him myself, but it got put off. Perhaps I had best let it alone for the present. Often it is best to do just nothing, isn’t it?

“Has Philip been over? Remember me to him when you see him, and tell Robert I love him well!

“As for you! whatever is best in me is yours already!”

Mrs. Barrimore read this letter in her bedroom with the door locked.

She laughed and cried a little over it, and finally did what most women do with epistles they greatly prize. She put it inside her bodice.

One little phrase in this letter came as balm to her troubled spirits after Philip’s remarks.

To Philip she was “the mother”—a person of the last generation trying to bloom out of due season; but to Colonel Lane she was still young and adorable.

Would Philip ever know, ever begin even to understand the sacrifice his mother had made for him?

Philip had heard from Dan’s open window his

uncle's remark about the letter, and found in the fact of Colonel Lane's writing to his mother another cause for resentment.

"Why didn't Colonel Lane write to you instead of to my mother?" Philip asked his uncle, who was uncorking a bottle of claret in the dining-room before the others came in.

"That is his business, I suppose," snapped Uncle Robert.

"I rather think it is mine," asserted Philip.

"Don't you make an ass of yourself, Philip," Uncle Robert said, raising his voice.

Philip turned on his heel. He had more than half a mind to get Soda and go back to the bungalow without lunching.

In the entrance hall he encountered Phyllis, who drew him into the smoking-room.

"Philip!" she ejaculated tragically, "I am miserable!"

"Whatever about?" inquired the young man rather sourly. He was for the moment miserable himself, and in no mood to hear Phyllis's troubles.

"Oh, don't look so cold and hard, Philip! You have always been my friend. I have always come to you."

Philip was still smarting under Uncle Robert's snub, and was still distinctly unsympathetic in manner.

"If the account of your misery is likely to be a long one, you had best put it off till after luncheon. The gong will sound directly," he said.

"Oh, if you don't want to hear!" ejaculated Phyllis childishly.

"But I do, dear," said Philip, more kindly. (After all, it was scarcely manly to vent his ill-humor on

this girl.) "You see, Phyllis, we should be interrupted," he added, showing her his watch—a gold one and a gift from Uncle Robert.

"I almost wish I had never been born," Phyllis asserted, not deigning to look at the watch. She came close to Philip, clutching his arm and peering up at him with childish, troubled eyes. "Philip, don't let Mr. Webster go to the White House," she blurted out.

"Why?" he asked her in amazement.

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it," she answered incoherently. "Stop him from going. You can if you like. Do! do! dear Philip!"

The gong sounded and there came the flutter of silk skirts on the staircase. Mrs. Barrimore, fresh and smiling, but with trouble in the dear grey eyes for those who could read them, entered the dining-room. Dan was already there with Uncle Robert, and presently Phyllis and Philip came in.

Philip was so occupied about the puzzling remarks he had just been hearing in the smoking-room that he forgot to resent his mother's very charming appearance. Love can take ten years off any woman's looks, and Mrs. Barrimore had a dear secret hidden under the dainty bodice.

"Well, Annie! What's the old Colonel got to say?" Uncle Robert asked, with a defiant glance at Philip, who did not see it.

"The letter is all about the Hendersons," Mrs. Barrimore answered with one of those lovely blushes of hers.

"They are most dreadfully poor," she went on hurriedly, to cover her confusion. "There are two boys at Dulwich College. I wonder what they will do when they leave school!"

"They must go to Sandhurst," affirmed Uncle Robert.

"But where is the money to come from?" she asked not unnaturally.

"Me!" shouted her brother. "M E—me!"

Everyone started, and Philip said: "Henderson is not a friend of yours—I don't see—"

"No, you don't see, Philip. You very often don't see. Those boys must have a chance. It is the business of old bachelors who are well-off to look to these things—also—*Bonum quo communicates eo melius*—which being interpreted for little Phyllis, means, 'The good in which you let others share becomes thereby the better.' We will have a confab after luncheon, Annie."

Uncle Robert, who was never quite so happy as when confronted by somebody's difficulties which he thought he could remove, carried his sister to his den as soon as luncheon was over to talk about the Hendersons.

"Lane will do all he can, I know," Uncle Robert began, when he had carefully closed the door. "But you know, Annie, he ought to keep what he has for little Phyll. What do you think of a hamper of game, and a few dozens of good wine for a start off? The country ought to be ashamed of the poor gratitude she shows to the men who have fought for her and suffered for her. No proper provision is made for soldiers at any time. Think of it, Annie! Many a good officer is lost to our Army because he can't afford the thing. An officer gets about enough to pay his laundry bill, and when he is too old, or when he is no further use to the nation, he can live in—East Dulwich! He can do as he can in genteel poverty. 'Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,' sings Scott. A nice bed a grateful country gives the soldier to rest

on! But talk never did anything. A hamper goes off this afternoon. Come, Annie, my love, help me with your woman's wit! The hamper must go to Lane, of course."

Dan had gone off to the room where he worked, which was big and airy and had a north light. The room had been empty until Uncle Robert had it converted into a temporary studio for Dan.

Phyllis, left alone with Philip, remarked: "I suppose Mr. Webster is safe out of the way. I heard Mr. Webster go to the studio—and Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Burns will be engaged for hours, so we can have our talk."

"Very well," answered Philip, yawning. "The sooner it's over the sooner to rest—and good-bye to Miss Phyll and her moaning!"

"Don't joke, Philip," cried Phyllis, with an impatient shrug of her shoulders. "I am serious, I tell you—really I am. I am miserable, and you are very unkind to laugh at me."

"I won't laugh. Forge ahead! Look! my face is as long as a fiddle," said Philip, trying not to smile.

At that same moment Mrs. Barrimore, referring to Colonel Lane's letter, found a postscript which she had overlooked. It ran:

"I have just read over this letter, and find I have been a little unjust to poor Mrs. Henderson. She really has her hands full with her invalid husband, and the boys are of necessity left a lot to themselves. Then the inadequate maid—the limited income! Some women would have taken to drink or drugs! Mrs. Henderson has only taken to religion! Under happier circumstances I believe she would be very different."

CHAPTER XXIV

WORSE COMPLICATIONS

"PHILIP, it would be horrible if Mr. Webster fell in love with Miss Le Breton!" began Phyllis.

"Why?" inquired Philip.

"Why? How can you ask! You know she has been insane," said Phyllis with indignation.

"She is just like other people now," rejoined Philip.

"But people who have once been insane may become so again," Phyllis reminded him.

"Possibly Miss Le Breton was never insane at all, but only hysterical," suggested Philip. "She struck me as a perfectly normal young woman. But whether she is or is not, Dan is not likely to fall in love with her."

"Isn't he!" cried Phyllis. "He absolutely raves about her."

"Painters always rave about a model which is to their taste. But to drop the subject of Dan. What are you miserable about?"

Phyllis most unexpectedly burst into tears, burying her face in Philip's waistcoat.

"Oh, Philip!" she sobbed. "I have found out my mistake! Dad"—(sob)—"was right after all!"

"What *do* you mean?" demanded Philip, now really alarmed.

"I mean"—(sob)—"that I ought not to have

married"—(sob). "I didn't know my own mind!" (More sobs.)

Philip put the girl from him and dabbed his waistcoat with his handkerchief.

"Look here, Phyllis," he said firmly, "you did a very silly thing in inducing Captain Arbuthnot to marry you; but it was only silly. It was not a crime. It will be a crime if you are false to the man you compelled to act in a way against which I am sure his sense of honor revolted. The one thing you have to do now, is to stand firmly by the vows you made and never let that unfortunate man find out what a shallow creature he married. What has changed you all at once? you who were so eager for letters?"

"I don't know," answered Phyllis crossly. "How should I know? You see, Charlie is such a long way off, and I have scarcely heard from him and—oh, he doesn't seem so nice as he did, now I can't see him—and—and, oh, I don't know! Charlie ought not to have listened to me. He is *heaps* older than I am! I can't help it, Philip, can I, if I find out I made a mistake?"

Philip was stern and silent. Anger filled his heart as he thought of the gallant young soldier out in India. But he had some pity, too, for Phyllis—fickle, lovable Phyllis!

"Don't look so angry, Philip," pleaded Phyllis, "I have something else to tell you, and if you turn on me I shall be desperate! I love Dan—yes, I love him! Now hate and despise me if you dare! If you do, if you throw me over, you may be sorry—after!"

"This is awful!" groaned Philip. "I never dreamed it was as bad as this. It is downright wicked of you! I must say it, even if it hurts you.

You must have seen this coming. You could have stopped it if you had any sense of right, and even decency."

Her next words came calmly. "Philip, have I ever been even a little free with Mr. Webster since he came back? I never laugh and chat with him; I am never alone with him; I am acting as a wife should. But I am miserable—*miserable!* Won't you pity me a little?"

"Poor little girl!" said Philip soothingly. "Yes, I have noticed that you never flirt with Dan. There, don't begin to cry again!"

She *was* crying weakly, pitifully. Philip took her in his arms to comfort her, as if she had been a child.

As fate would have it, Dan opened the door quietly and put his head in.

Immediately he retired, smiling. Philip and Phyllis did not see him, and Dan kept his own counsel.

"Run off to your room and bathe your eyes before mother or uncle see you," advised Philip, and the woe-begone little figure fled from the room and up the staircase.

Philip strode up and down with his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

"This is a nice kettle of fish," he said to himself. "The old Colonel had longer sight than any of us. My only hope is her fickleness. This infatuation for Dan may burn itself out. But Dan? what if he, thinking Phyllis free, should fall in love with her!"

The promise had been given to Phyllis that her secret should be kept. But in some way Dan must be warned.

Ah! there was Dan smoking in the garden. No time must be lost.

Philip found Dan chuckling to himself.

"I want a chat with you. Dan," said Philip, scowling.

"Anything the matter, old man?" inquired Dan, still smiling.

"I want a word about Phyllis," said Philip.

"Oh!" answered Dan, winking.

"I don't know what you mean by your asinine behavior," said Philip indignantly.

"Forgive me!" said Dan, growing serious; "I was in a ridiculous mood."

"I want to warn you, Dan, not to let yourself get too fond of Phyllis," said Philip. "I want to tell you that there is an unsurmountable obstacle to—to the possibility of anything between you two.

"My dear fellow!" broke out Dan, laughing outright, "make yourself quite easy! I have no intention whatever of poaching on your preserves!"

"My preserves, man! Heavens! what can you be thinking of?"

Dan eyed his companion with whimsical criticism in his merry blue eyes, but he did not tell of the embrace he had witnessed so short a time before. "They want to keep it dark for some reason—very likely the Colonel," he thought within himself. But what he said was:

"All right, old man, no offence meant—a natural conclusion, you know, from your remarks, and Miss Lane's frequent visits to the bungalow. I see I was 'off the trail,' as old Alvin says."

"You were, very much indeed off the trail," commented Philip.

"He needn't tell such whoppers about it," Dan said inwardly; "and I don't see why he should keep it a secret from me."

Aloud he said: "Whatever your reasons may be for warning me not to fall in love with Miss Lane, I will respect them. But there is not much to be feared in that quarter. The little lady did flirt with me when I was a blind man, but now she is all propriety."

Philip was satisfied, for he knew that Dan's word was as good as another man's oath.

"I am not staying on to dinner," Philip next said. "I want to get to work; moreover, the evenings begin to close in, and the road is lonely and rutty, and I don't want any more trouble with Soda's hock."

Seeing his mother coming towards them, he explained to her that he was going.

"When will you bring the story to read to us, dear?" she asked.

"Oh, some time," he answered. "I am going to read it to the folks at the White House. Alvin asked me to do so. He thinks it will interest Miss Le Breton. You know I always said I would do anything I could for poor Eweretta's half-sister."

"Dear, faithful heart!" ejaculated the mother.

Somehow the remark made Philip very uncomfortable.

CHAPTER XXV

PHYLLIS THE MARTYR!

OCTOBER had come, still Colonel Lane did not return.

Mr. Burns's portrait was finished, but Dan was still an inmate of Hawk's Nest, for not only had Eweretta consented to sit to him for his Madonna, but he had been commissioned by Alvin to do another portrait of her for himself.

Philip had read some chapters of his new novel to the inmates of the White House, as desired, but it had not been received with the enthusiasm he had confidently expected.

In this novel Philip had embodied part of his own story. The first part, dealing with the love romance, was charmingly told, but it went on to show how the hero entered upon a new life after the death of the heroine, and saw that, after all, she would not have been the best wife for him. He needed a woman who could advance his interests—a society personage, and searched for and found her. Now and then some poetic allusion would be made to the first love after the marriage with the lady of quality, but the keynote of the book was, that a marriage of convenience worked best, that early loves were as a beautiful springtime which must give place to summer, and that the summer was the real full life of a man, in which the real purposes of his existence occupied his horizon.

Philip had been disappointed, his vanity had been wounded by the reception his story got at the White House. He had not expected appreciation from the rough Colonial, or from the commonplace Mrs. Le Breton, but he had wrongly imagined that Miss Le Breton would be different. All she had said was that the language was beautiful and that no doubt the story was true to life, but that it was very depressing.

Now Philip considered the book exactly the reverse to depressing. He thought it was inspiring the way the hero rose above his early sorrow and made a success of his life.

However, after that one evening he did not visit his neighbors. He did not say he would never visit them again, even in his own mind, but he had no inclination to go. He shut himself inside his bungalow, working on and improving his novel. A little later on he meant to spend a few weeks in London. He had done this occasionally for the past few years, and it had been on one of the visits that he had met Eweretta, who was staying with her father at the same hotel.

Shut in the bungalow, Philip often found himself reverting to Aimée Le Breton.

No, he decided, she was not nearly so interesting as he had at first thought her. Moreover, the likeness to Eweretta was only skin deep. In fact, it was scarcely that. This girl had a totally different expression—the outcome of a totally different set of thoughts—from Eweretta.

Eweretta had not been in any sense critical. Aimée Le Breton *was* critical. Eweretta had been frankly outspoken; this girl was wrapped about with reserve. The thing that puzzled him most in her was her

intelligence. It seemed impossible that she could ever have been mentally deficient.

Dan looked in at the bungalow always on his way home from the White House, and his extravagant admiration for Aimée Le Breton left no room for anxiety in Philip's mind lest Dan, thrown as he was so constantly with Phyllis, should begin to care for her in a way not allowable.

Phyllis rode over on her cycle to pour forth complaints into Philip's ear, and to weep, and call herself hard names, reserving even harder ones for Captain Arbuthnot for having consented to the proposal to be married secretly.

Philip rated and petted the girl by turns.

One thing he insisted upon, and that was that she should, under his eye and direction, write affectionately to her husband.

"You can't want to be so cruel as to make him suffer more, when he is having such a hard time already," Philip told her. "You have made him marry you, and you've just got to make the best of it."

"And I—I breaking my heart all the time because I have found *the* man I *could* love too late!"

"Breaking your fiddle-sticks!" said Philip with irony. "Your heart isn't worth calling a heart! But you've got a head, and I recommend you to use it. Believe me, love is an infantile ailment like measles, and when you've had it you're immune. In my opinion you have never had it at all, but will be immune all the same."

"That is just as good as calling me shallow and heartless," said Phyllis resentfully.

"No," rejoined Philip reflectively. "You are sowing your wild oats after a feminine fashion, that is

all. Possibly—mind, I say possibly—you will grow what they call a heart some time, and that husband of yours shall know nothing of the interval between if I can prevent it.”

Phyllis stamped her small foot petulantly. “Can’t you see, Philip,” she cried, “that it will be *impossible* for me to live with Charlie when he comes back?”

“No, I can’t!” snapped Philip.

It was just when this last sentence in this particular interview had been uttered, that Dan himself came in unannounced.

He smiled as he saw the receding skirt passing through the door which led to another room.

“I am not going to make a visitation, old man,” said Dan breezily. “Just looked in to say ‘How-do-you-do’ and be off.”

“Sit down and have a smoke,” said Philip, “you can’t be in a hurry.”

“It is awfully good of you,” replied Dan (who was inwardly admiring what he thought was the mastery of hospitality over inclination), “but I must get back. Mr. Burns and I are going over to Winchelsea after luncheon, and I must cycle back quickly.”

“Now I shall have to stop longer or I shall overtake him,” said Phyllis, who had emerged from the inner room as soon as she heard Dan depart.

Philip yawned. He was getting a little tired of the business.

“Wait half an hour then,” he said.

“No! you are so cross to-day. I shall go and ride round here for a bit and then go home,” said Phyllis.

“Good-bye, then!”

“You are glad to get rid of me!”

“You say so.”

"You think so."

Philip laughed—not very pleasantly.

Phyllis walked out of the bungalow with her small nose in the air, glancing back over her shoulder, however, to see if Philip had come to the window to call her back.

Not seeing him, she mounted her cycle and rode off.

After a little dallying, she took the road to Hastings.

She had ridden about half a mile when she came upon Dan, who was doing something to his cycle. Naturally she slowed up to ask him what was wrong.

"It's all right now," said Dan cheerfully, "we can ride on together. Have you been to the bungalow?" he added with a twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, yes," answered Phyllis, "and Philip was so disagreeable!"

"You interfered with his work, I expect," laughed Dan. "That is a sure and certain way of making an author disagreeable."

They rode on for a time without speaking, for the snorting of a motor-car made itself heard, and all their wits were needed to keep well out of the way of the monster.

When the motor had passed Dan said: "I am sad to think I shall soon be going away, Miss Lane. My work at the White House is nearly finished."

Phyllis felt her throat suddenly constricted. She averted her head. She could not answer.

"Possibly I may see your father," went on Dan, swerving a little to avoid some sharp stones. "You see, East Dulwich is not far from Dulwich village, where I live."

"Father will be glad to see you," she said coldly—the more coldly that she had so much warmth to hide.

"I shall be glad enough to see him anyway, if I get the chance," went on Dan. "Take care, Miss Lane! you very nearly went into the ditch!"

"How stupid of me!" said Phyllis tonelessly. "There is room enough in this road, too."

She knew that by some inward wilfulness she had kept her cycle as far as she could from that of her companion.

"It will be strange to be back at home," Dan next said. "It is a pretty home, too, in its way—a big, old, *really* old, cottage, with little latticed windows with diamond-shaped panes. There is a porch with two seats in it, and that and all the cottage is covered with creepers—not Virginian—the tool house is covered with that—but rose, and honeysuckle, and blue clematis, and a grape-vine. The garden is pretty, too, quite a cottage garden, with vegetables and fruit trees and borders of flowers."

"Is there anywhere to paint?" asked Phyllis.

"Surely Philip has told you of my gem of a studio in the garden?" asked the surprised Dan.

"Oh, I remember now," said Phyllis. "You have leopard skins on the floor, and some old furniture that Philip said was quite beautiful."

"I got it for a song at a sale at one of the big old-fashioned Dulwich houses. My sister Isabel corrects exercise-books there in the evenings. She brings them home from the James Allen School, you know. She can't do them in the same room with Aunt Lizzie and my mother. Aunt Lizzie talks without stopping, and my mother chirps in now and then."

Phyllis put a question now and then to keep Dan on this topic. She had a mortal dread that if he began to rave about the beauty and sweetness of Miss Le Breton, she should betray herself.

It chimed a quarter past one as the cyclists reached Blacklands Church.

"We shall be quite in time," said Dan.

"Oh, yes, we shall be quite in time," echoed Phyllis in a tired voice.

Dan noticed then for the first time that his companion was growing thinner, and that her face was pale in spite of the brisk ride.

"Do you not feel well?" he asked suddenly, and in a very sympathetic voice.

"Oh, *please* don't pity me!" cried Phyllis, flushing up to the roots of her hair. "That is the last thing I could stand from *you*."

Dan was much troubled, and not a little puzzled.

"I am sorry," was all he found to say.

"I am well enough," broke out Phyllis, "but I have troubles—like other people."

Dan was bewildered. The tone in which the girl spoke hinted at something serious. A lover's "tiff" was a trifling matter. If she and Philip had fallen out they would fall in again.

"Take long views, my dear girl," he said kindly. "Clouds pass, you know."

She laughed a bitter little laugh.

"Clouds do," she said in a hard voice, "but tragedy doesn't. There are things that last all one's life."

"Good God!" ejaculated Dan. "You can't mean that you have a trouble so very serious?"

"Say no more about it," said Phyllis; "as I told you, pity is the last thing I could bear from *you*."

If Dan had been furnished with the usual amount of vanity possessed by good-looking and attractive young men, he might have guessed the truth. But he was not. He was singularly free from vanity. The emphasis on the pronoun was quite lost upon him.

All he grasped was that she objected to pity. So he remained silent.

Happily they soon reached Hawk's Nest, and Phyllis was able to hurry to her room.

Once there, she wept with rage that she had spoken as she had. She felt she could not endure it if Dan should guess the state of her heart, especially as she was sure—yes, perfectly sure—that he cared nothing for her beyond what he cared for that sister Isabel of whom he talked.

Of course, if Dan had cared differently, it would all have been equally hopeless, but still she wanted him to care. She foolishly imagined that she could take up what she called her "cross," if only she could know that Dan loved her.

And Philip! He had made her a hypocrite, she told herself savagely. He had made her write affectionately to her husband when she had not meant a word she wrote.

Phyllis considered herself a downright martyr.

CHAPTER XXVI

"DRAT LOVE AFFAIRS!" SAID MRS. PICKETT

EWERETTA was not destined to be so completely isolated after all, for one fine afternoon Mrs. Pickett took a sudden resolve, and putting on her "best things," walked across the field and made a state call at the White House, where she was so kindly received, that she was emboldened to ask the whole party to take tea at the Farm on the following afternoon.

The invitation was accepted, so there was a grand "clean-up" of the big house-place (not that it seemed to need it!), and there was a great baking of cakes and fruit-pies. The best china and table-linen were got out, together with some really fine old silver, and when the guests arrived the table was already laid for tea.

Minnie had picked a huge bunch of dahlias and placed them in a beautiful old china jug in the center of the table, which was loaded with good things, for tea was a genuine meal at Pickett's Farm.

Pickett was performing his ablutions in the big kitchen that joined the house-place, where there was a long sink with a pump at one end of it. Mrs. Pickett and Minnie were "dressed for company."

A big log fire burned cheerfully in the old-fashioned fireplace, making the brass and copper utensils glitter and flash. The "settle" and some high-backed arm-

chairs were drawn up near the fire. Altogether the place looked the picture of hospitality and comfort. A sweet scent of apples was perceptible in the air. A bob-tailed sheep-dog and a collie lay asleep upon a rug by the fender, and Alvin made friends with them while Mrs. Pickett conducted Eweretta and Mrs. Le Breton upstairs to remove their outer garments.

Soon Pickett appeared, and sat down with Alvin near the fire, and the two men began to discuss farming from the English and the Canadian point of view.

"I have been pulling and carting mangold to-day," said Pickett, handing a tobacco-jar to Alvin, with an invitation to "fill up." "I want to get them in while the weather is favorable."

"Some believe in leaving them longer to improve," said Alvin, "but I think you are right. A frost might come any time now. It is very cold to-day."

"I see you know a bit about farming," said Pickett with approval.

"I know a bit about most things," said Alvin. "You have to, out in the North-West. But farming in Canada is very different from farming in England."

"I suppose so," answered Pickett with interest.

"And you want plenty of grit to stand the life," went on Alvin.

"But it is cheap living, isn't it?" inquired Pickett.

Alvin laughed. "It is double what it is here," he said. "Animals, wagons, agricultural implements cost a lot out there. We depend a lot on salt pork, and our guns. Prairie chicken is good eating. It isn't unlike partridge—and snipe—well, you can get as much snipe as you like."

The entrance of the women stopped the conversation at this point, and a strapping maid having brought

in the tea-pot, they all sat down to tea, and Philip's name came up.

"You know Mr. Barrimore who lives in our bungalow?" said Mrs. Pickett.

"Of course they do, mother," put in Minnie. "Why, you've seen him go in and out there yourself."

"I said they knew him, didn't I?" asked Mrs. Pickett. "You are a bit too sharp, Minnie. Pass the cream to Mrs. Le Breton."

"He's a bit stand-offish," went on Mrs. Pickett. "He often comes up past our farm, but he doesn't look in. He hasn't been here since his stable was finished. He talks to Pickett now and again over the gate."

"Oh, he's right enough!" interrupted the farmer. "He's taken up with his young lady. He'll be getting married one of these days, and then he'll soon find eyes for other people. Bless you! they're all the same when they are courting."

"Is he really engaged?" inquired Alvin.

"Well, sir, don't it look like it? You have windows, and likewise eyes. Miss Lane's always coming over to the bungalow on that cycle of hers."

"Which to me don't seem right and proper for a young lady to do," put in Mrs. Pickett. "I wonder at Colonel Lane allowing it. If it was my Minnie, she'd hear about it! Why, it's the talk of Hastings; my friend Mrs. Hannington says so. Miss Lane is staying at Hawk's Nest now, while her father's gadding off somewhere. There is talk that *he* has got another establishment near London. Of course, that being so, he wouldn't look after his daughter properly, not having proper notions of right and wrong."

"Mother!" broke out Pickett, pausing in the act

of carving a chicken. "I wonder at your repeating tales like that! Every time Mrs. Hannington comes, there is some new yarn to somebody's discredit. I can't bear the sight of her!"

Eweretta ate her chicken, with her eyes cast down. She did not like this type of conversation. Mrs. Le Breton, too, looked uncomfortable.

Alvin, who noted this, began hastily to introduce a new topic. Naturally the topic was Canada, as he knew little about anything else. "There will be blizzards in Canada now," he began. "You wouldn't think it, that a great fire could rage there at this time of the year? Yet I remember one when I was on my way to Saskatoon. It was a line of fire six miles long, and the flames were seven feet high. It could be seen forty miles away; and that was in October."

Farmer Pickett smiled discreetly. He would not contradict his guest, but he evidently believed him to be pulling the long bow.

"How perfectly awful!" exclaimed Minnie, who did believe the tale.

"It was a grand sight," said Alvin.

Mrs. Le Breton shivered. She had seen such "grand sights" unpleasantly near.

Alvin pointed to the sleeping dogs. "Now I dare say you think your dogs good herders," he said; "but I had a pony that would beat them hollow."

"Indeed!" said Pickett, with the same incredulous smile.

"You should have seen her at work," went on Alvin, "jumping over the badger and gopher holes and mounds. I had only to sit tight, and she would collect the strayed oxen better than any dog. She knew all their names as well as I did."

"Perhaps she could talk?" suggested Pickett, winking at the company generally.

Alvin was annoyed, and said no more for some time, so Mrs. Pickett kept the ball rolling.

"I think Canada would be a bit too lively for *me*," she said.

"Most people don't think it lively," put in Mrs. Le Breton.

"You are thinking of the prairie, mother," said Eweretta, who had not before spoken. "The towns are quite different. Montreal is gay enough."

"Do you keep chickens?" asked Mrs. Pickett.

"At Montreal?" demanded Eweretta.

"No, at the White House," laughed Mrs. Pickett. "You ought to, for you have plenty of room."

"We have none yet," said Mrs. Le Breton.

"We could give you a bit of a start with some," Pickett joined in. "Favorolles are good all-round fowls, and we could well spare some. What do you keep in the little wood, Mr. Alvin?"

The question was so sudden and unexpected, that Alvin could not at first reply.

At last he stammered out:

"Nothing—as yet."

"You're not offended at my asking, are you?" demanded the farmer. "No offence meant, you know; only seeing that the wood is wired in so finely, and you have built a high wall round something in the clearing, I wondered—"

Mrs. Le Breton caught Pickett's eye and slightly shook her head.

A silence fell on the company, and even when at last a few remarks were exchanged, all felt a sense of strain, and it was a relief when tea was over and the two men sat by the fire to smoke.

Then it was that Minnie rather shyly offered to show Miss Le Breton round the rambling old house. There was not a great deal to show, but Eweretta was genuinely interested, because she had never seen anything of the sort before; also, the girls found plenty to say to each other when once the ice was broken.

Minnie was not reserved, nor did she perceive that Eweretta was so.

It was in the apple-room, where the winter fruit was stored, that Minnie confided to Eweretta that she had a sweetheart.

"He's a clerk in the Gasworks," she explained, "and he often comes over, and we meet in the rick-yard; but I daren't let father and mother know, because they say I shan't have a young man till I'm turned twenty-one. Harry—his name is Henry Johnson—and I met in Hollington Wood in the spring. I had gone over to the churchyard to put some flowers on grandmother's grave, and he came in from the wood, and we got talking, and he walked with me to the tram. That was the beginning. He is so nice, and quiet, and respectable. I am sure father and mother couldn't dislike him. But, you see, they are so determined I shall turn twenty-one before I am engaged. We aren't really engaged, Miss Le Breton, you know, but we both know we shall be. It's a long time to wait, for I am only nineteen."

"It is best to wait a long time," said Eweretta. "Men change so."

Minnie looked at her companion with incredulous round eyes.

"Some men, perhaps," she said, as if grudgingly conceding something. "But not men who *really* and *truly* love," she added.

"Yes," rejoined Eweretta, "even those who love

really and truly fall out of love sometimes. They don't mean to do it. It is not a crime. No one ought to blame them for it. But I think love ought to be well tested before marriage. If the failing of love comes before marriage it is only very sad. If it comes after marriage, *then* it is tragic."

Minnie looked at the speaker bewildered. To her love, once felt, was a thing eternal. At last, after a few moments of rapid thought, an explanation of the strange words she had just heard came to her, and she said with a sympathetic ring in her voice:

"Have you lost a lover, Miss Le Breton? If so, I am—oh! so sorry!"

Eweretta smiled an April smile, and gently laying her hand on Minnie's said: "Yes, but don't be sorry. I am glad, for it has saved me much worse pain."

There were tears in Minnie's bright eyes as she repeated: "Oh, but I am so sorry!"

The friendship of these two girls dated from this little scene in the apple-room.

Eweretta genuinely liked Minnie, and Minnie, with a young girl's fresh enthusiasm, adored Miss Le Breton.

After the guests had departed that afternoon, Minnie said to her mother: "I know what made Miss Le Breton 'queer in her head' for a time. She had an unfortunate love affair, but you must not mention it."

"Drat love affairs!" exclaimed Mrs. Pickett. "Don't you get having any till you are old enough to know what you are about!"

CHAPTER XXVII

A HALF-CONFIDENCE

ABOUT this time Annie Barrimore began to be anxious about the health of Phyllis. Phyllis was piqued; she lost her appetite; moreover, she had grown distinctly snappish, when she chose to talk at all. She was more often mopish.

Dan had departed for the vine-clad cottage in Dulwich Village. Colonel Lane still remained with his friend, who had "picked up" a little.

After vain and abortive questionings of Phyllis, Mrs. Barrimore wrote a rather distressed letter to the girl's father, to which she received a characteristic reply:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—

"Do not worry about Phyllis's health. All you see is nothing physical. The symptoms are those of another love affair. Who is the man *this* time? Surely not Mr. Webster?"

To which Mrs. Barrimore replied:

"No, it is certainly not Dan. Phyllis treated him with marked coldness. It cannot be anyone new either, for she sees no one but Philip, and *you* know that anything in that quarter is *quite* out of the question. It is possible that she is fretting anew for Captain Arbuthnot. I wish she would trust me! I am very, very fond of her."

To this Colonel Lane replied by reiterating his former opinion.

"I know her better than you do, my dear friend," he wrote. "She has a new fancy. She always behaves the same when she has a new fancy! Do not fear for her health. That is all right. But I think (if I may so far burden you, and I know I may!) that you should accompany her on her 'supposed' visits to Philip."

This last letter worried Mrs. Barrimore not a little. She hated the suggestion of "spying" which the Colonel's request involved. Yet she remembered having told Phyllis (on one of those summer afternoons when there was a garden-party at Hawk's Nest) that she ought not to visit Philip alone.

Phyllis had been wilful. She had had her way; but Mrs. Barrimore had never approved of the visits to the bungalow. As a matter of fact, she was in ignorance of the frequency of these visits. She fully agreed with Colonel Lane's desire that she should accompany the girl.

But it was actually repellent to this woman to "spy" or do anything that was not absolutely above-board.

For this reason, after a bewildering half-hour of racking thought, which left her head aching, she went in search of Phyllis to "have it out."

Phyllis was certainly not gone out, for rain had been pouring down unceasingly since breakfast. But though Mrs. Barrimore visited the drawing-room, the dining-room, and finally the smoking-room (incidentally waking up Uncle Robert, who had gone to sleep

over the fire—and the *Times*), she failed to discover the girl. Mrs. Barrimore had passed Phyllis's bedroom as she had come downstairs, and had seen through the open door that the room was empty.

Suddenly she recalled the fact that when last they had been together in Robertson Street, Phyllis had said: "Do you mind if while you go into Plummer's, I run to that art shop in Wellington Place to get a few tubes of oil colors?"

She had meant to ask Phyllis afterwards what she wanted the colors for, but had forgotten it. She now thought that possibly Phyllis had been inspired by Dan's painting to try her hand in secret, so she went up the flight of steep stairs that led to the big attic, which Uncle Robert had converted into a studio.

There, sure enough, she found the forlorn Phyllis, seated on Dan's stool, at Dan's easel, producing something on canvas, which brought a smile of amusement to Mrs. Barrimore's face, which she quickly hid for fear of hurting the amateur artist's feelings.

"I have been looking for you everywhere, dear," began Mrs. Barrimore brightly. "I had no idea you had taken up painting."

"One must do something," said Phyllis petulantly, throwing down her brushes. "This weather is just detestable—rain—rain—rain—and everything's so miserable! Oh, forgive me, dear Mrs. Barrimore! How horrid I am! and how ungrateful after all your kindness to talk so!"

Phyllis had caught sight of the pained look her first words had brought up on the gentle face of her friend and hostess, and had felt ashamed and sorry in a moment.

Mrs. Barrimore's arms were protectingly round the

wilful girl before half the apology had been uttered.

This was her dearest friend's only child.

"Phyllis darling," the elder woman said, affection shining in her eyes, "tell me what is the matter. You have no mother, can't you trust me? I have been so troubled about you, and I am going to be quite frank and above-board with you. I have written to your father to say I don't think you are well, and he—"

"What does dad say?" demanded Phyllis, drawing her head back from the friendly bosom, to gaze into the elder woman's eyes.

"He thinks you have again fallen in love."

Mrs. Barrimore felt a tremor run through the girl's frame before she freed herself, and stood defiant, with parted lips through which the breath came quickly.

"And if I have!" the girl cried, "is it a crime? Can anyone help loving? But father need not trouble himself. I can never marry the man I love. I cannot even let him know I love him. I could not in any case. He does not love me, and his heart is another's, and always will be. Oh, I know that quite well. At least, I can be allowed to grieve in peace!"

Mrs. Barrimore was deeply concerned. She did not ask who the man was; she thought she knew, and to her the love did not seem so altogether hopeless.

"My dear, take courage," she said. "He may come to love you yet."

Tears gushed from the girl's eyes and fell unchecked.

"Oh, no! and if he *did*, that would be worse than anything, for we could never marry!"

Mrs. Barrimore, thinking of Philip, believed that Phyllis thought that loyalty to Eweretta would cause him to remain unmarried.

It might be, after all, that Uncle Robert had been right when he had said that Philip had got over the loss of Eweretta. The mother devoutly hoped he had, or would as time went on, and since she could not marry the father, she would be glad—yes, glad—that Phyllis should become her daughter-in-law.

She wished she could sound Philip, but he was so unapproachable. There were tears in her own eyes as she again told Phyllis to hope and not despair.

"I don't know what to hope for," said Phyllis. "I have been a little fool, and now I am paying for it, and I shall go on paying for it! Father always said I didn't know my own mind, but I do now—yes, I do! Father said he wouldn't let me be engaged to Captain Arbuthnot till I had done sowing my wild oats. Fancy that! sowing wild oats!—as if girls ever did! and that brought all the trouble. If he had let me be engaged, then all this trouble would have been saved, for we should have soon quarrelled, and parted."

Mrs. Barrimore could make nothing of this amazing statement. She put it down to the girl's excited state—wild meaningless words these must be!

"Well, my dear," she said quietly, "if we do what we believe to be right, all will be well with us. It is doing things we know to be wrong that brings all the real trouble."

After Mrs. Barrimore had gone Phyllis nibbled the end of her paint brush, an angry frown spoiling her piquant face.

"I believe," she said to herself with comical frankness, "that if Charlie were in love with someone else, and I hadn't got him, I should want him."

Then her eyes fell on the old studio coat which Dan had omitted to pack with the rest of his belongings,

and her eyes filled with resentful tears. How Dan worshipped the girl he called his "Madonna!" What a tender light came into his blue eyes at the mere mention of her name!

Phyllis was horribly jealous, and horribly sorry for herself.

She remembered with annoyance that Miss Le Breton looked superb on a horse. She had one now, and rode with her uncle. Everyone was talking about that girl's splendid horsemanship—just as if all Canadian girls didn't ride well!

And she, Phyllis, had only a bicycle!

Girls never looked particularly well on bicycles—and they did on horses.

But Dan hadn't seen Miss Le Breton on horseback. That was some comfort. He was gone away, too; that was another comfort.

Was it a comfort?

Didn't she miss him every moment of the day?

All at once a sense of her own wickedness in thinking of Dan covered her with shame. She was Charlie's wife, and she had no right to think of anyone but Charlie. She remembered how madly in love she had been with Charlie—poor Charlie! risking his life in that horrid native rising! If Charlie knew how fickle she had been, though it had only been in thought, would he cease to love her? She was not at all sure that she wanted Charlie to cease to love her. She was, on the whole, glad that Philip had insisted on her writing affectionately to her husband.

All at once Phyllis burst into a fit of hysterical laughter.

"I believe dad is right," she told herself. "I don't know my own mind! But where—*where* shall I land?"

"Hallo!" came in the stentorian voice of Mr. Burns, from the bottom of the staircase. "What's the joke?"

He mounted the stairs heavily and appeared in the doorway of the studio.

"What's the joke?" he repeated.

"Look at my picture, Mr. Burns!" cried Phyllis with renewed laughter. "That chicken I have painted couldn't walk in at the cottage door if he tried! See! he is close to the cottage and his head is level with the bedroom window!"

Uncle Robert adjusted his spectacles and looked at the work of art in question.

"It must be an antediluvian cock," he decided. "Phyllis, I fear your talent does not lie in the direction of drawing."

"It lies in the direction of my making a fool of myself," she replied.

"Ah, well, little Phyll!" retorted Uncle Robert, smiling. "Horace says: '*Dulce est desipere in loco*,' which being interpreted, is, 'It is sweet to play the fool now and then, in the place for so doing.' But draw the line at *hurting*, little Phyll—either others or yourself. Then it does not much matter."

"Mr. Burns, I have been hurting you and dear Mrs. Barrimore these last days. I have been a disagreeable pig."

"Look here!" broke out Uncle Robert. "You are a bit moped. What do you say to the Hippodrome? Annie has a crusty old maid who is coming to spend the evening here. Supposing you and I go off on our own! We can get an early dinner, just for us two, and then be off before Miss Nightingale appears. Nightingale, indeed! She has a voice like a raven!"

Phyllis laughed naturally now. She was delighted

to go out with Mr. Burns, who always gave her a good time.

"How lovely!" she cried, pulling off a pinafore, with which she had tried to get a professional appearance, and flinging her picture in a corner. "But look at the weather!"

"What does that matter!" said Uncle Robert. "I shall order a cab. What says the proverb: 'For the morning rain leave not your journey.' I think it will clear up, but, anyway, get your bib and tucker ready. I'll go and ask Annie to arrange our early dinner."

"How good—how very good they all are to me!" Phyllis told herself when Mr. Burns had departed on his errand. "And what a horrid little wretch I am!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PROBLEM OF EWERETTA'S MIND

NOTHING had happened during those days when Dan Webster had made the two pictures of Eweretta—that is, nothing had happened that either the painter or the model could single out and say that it was important. Yet, to both of them these days stood out from the rest of their lives. They were days neither would ever forget.

Their talk had been commonplace, and Mrs. Le Breton had always been present at the sittings.

Sometimes their eyes had met—met and rested on each other. That was all.

Eweretta's eyes, being a woman's, had not failed to read the worship in the eyes of the man.

It was Dan's which had failed to read the light of newly-awakened pleasure in those of his model.

Perhaps Eweretta's eyes had so long been sad that even in happiness there was pathos in them.

Anyway, Dan had said good-bye to his Madonna without the slightest knowledge that he had come as a joy into her life, and that his going—mattered.

He had stumbled boyishly in the last words he had spoken to her, holding her hand awkwardly. He recalled his lame utterance afterwards with humiliation and savage regret.

He had wanted to say something that she would remember, something that should tell her that one fortnight of his life had been worth all the rest put

together—that her face which he had put on canvas was even more indelibly fixed on his heart. He had not wanted to imply love by his words, but homage. He wanted her to know that she was indeed his Madonna—a thing holy. And all he had said was “I am sorry it is all over!”

Eweretta had met his gaze frankly, with that mystic smile on her lips which he loved, and she had only said “Good-bye.”

But she had watched the stalwart figure pass along the white road past the bungalow with that mystic smile still on her lips, and a strange happiness had possessed her.

Light had somehow invaded the grayness which so long had shrouded her existence.

She asked herself no questions as to the future. She lived now in the moment. She knew herself once more beloved, and to every woman that is joy.

Happiness will not bear dissection and analysis. Eweretta attempted neither.

She had seen the light of dawn in the East, and she watched for the sun to rise.

She remembered that she was young.

The picture Dan had made of her in her ordinary white gown (he had asked for this particular gown because of the soft folds with which it clung to her slim figure), now hung in the dining-room.

Eweretta, standing alone before it, looked at her other self. She noted the deep, rich red of the rose pinned at the bosom, where two soft folds of muslin crossed each other—the only ornament. She noted how Dan had caught that blue shimmer in the black of her hair, where it slightly waved away from her temples.

She saw, too, that the face was different from the

old Eweretta's, it held something more which she could not define.

The difference was that the old, glad Eweretta had never suffered. The merry look was gone, and in its place was a marvellous sweetness.

Eweretta saw that she was indeed very beautiful. She saw it in this picture as she had never seen it in her mirror.

But it was the little picture—the Madonna—that she liked best.

Dan had brought the robe she wore for this picture. It was of blue—a lovely blue of a summer sky. The nun-like head-dress, Dan's own deft hands had arranged. She recalled that his touch had made her tremble, and that she had been angry with herself for betraying emotion. But she had not really betrayed herself at all. The slight tremor had passed unnoticed by Dan, because he was so much taken up with anxiety to hide his own emotion at such close proximity to his divinity.

Eweretta had uttered solemn warnings to Minnie Pickett in the apple-room. But she uttered no warnings to herself.

She basked in the sunshine of undefined emotions, and Mrs. Le Breton and Thomas Alvin were surprised and delighted at the change in her. She was clearly happy, happy in spite of all she had gone through.

She still looked from her window at night, and saw Philip's light burning, but now she looked without emotion.

Another Philip, and another Eweretta, had once loved—a long, long time ago, but they were both dead.

Alvin's idea of buying a horse for her to ride had

delighted Eweretta. She had ridden much in the prairie before she had gone with her father to Montreal. She had often ridden alone to a town many miles distant to get the mail and post letters. On these occasions she had carried a revolver, for wolves were plentiful.

Riding here at Hastings would be less exciting, but very, very delightful.

The rides soon put color into her cheeks, and she lost that fragile look which had worried Alvin.

One morning, about a week after Dan's departure, a box of lovely hot-house flowers arrived for her, and she knew well who was the sender.

The dawn she had seen in the East was growing rosy red.

Alvin and Mrs. Le Breton discussed this box of flowers in secret.

The woman was glad, but Alvin, who had still hopes of reuniting the old lovers—though those hopes had been considerably shaken—was not so pleased. He liked Dan—who did not?—but he wanted to be sure, very sure indeed, that Eweretta's love for Philip was really dead before he encouraged another suitor.

Alvin was very desirous of seeing Eweretta happily married. He did not believe that Mrs. Le Breton would be a long liver. He himself might "snuff out" at any moment. True, he was hale and hearty, as prairie products are wont to be; but the superstition which had formed so much and marred so much of his life clung to him. "The Thirteenth Man," to whom ill-luck had ever clung, would never make old bones. Alvin was convinced that his end would be sudden and tragic. He wanted to make sure of Eweretta's future.

One thing he had already done since his promise to the girl that her identity should not be revealed. He had made a will leaving everything to Aimée Le Breton (which was only giving back to Eweretta what was her own).

Thomas Alvin, in spite of his being for the first time in his life in a good monetary position, was far from happy. Exteriorly he appeared cheerful, but there were times of deep depression, when he always retired to the enclosed wood. He never drank now. In fact, he had only for a little time given way to drink, and that had been at the White House. Drink is not a Canadian vice.

His one idea, when he had treacherously possessed himself of Eweretta's fortune, had been to get to England and live as a "gentleman." Now that he was established in a good house, well-furnished, he pined for the free life of the prairie. Often as he lay in his comfortable bed, he would think with longing of the "shake-down" in a "shack" where he had rolled himself in a rug with a saddle for a pillow.

There were times when a wild longing to return to the old life possessed him. Then he would retire to the enclosed wood to fight his battle in solitude.

What lay within the high wall he had built round the clearing no one knew, and no one of his household asked.

If Mrs. Le Breton and Eweretta guessed they kept their knowledge to themselves, not speaking of it even to each other.

Nothing took Alvin so completely out of himself as riding with Eweretta.

They went long distances, spending the whole day sometimes, and lunching at an inn, while the horses rested.

They often went to Winchelsea and to Rye, because Eweretta had shown herself so charmed with these old-world places on their first visit.

It was when Alvin and Eweretta were returning from one of these expeditions that Alvin asked the girl what she had written to Dan in reply to the gift of flowers.

"I did not write myself. I dictated to 'mother,' for I thought that Dan might chance to show the letter to Philip, and he would of course recognize my handwriting. I thanked him nicely—that was all."

"Dan!" She had not said Mr. Webster. That was what Alvin noted.

She herself had spoken the name quite unconsciously. She always thought of him as Dan.

"Of course," the girl went on, reining in her horse a little that they might talk more easily, "of course, Philip would only think it an extraordinary incident that Aimée and I should write so much alike, but it *might* put him on the track of the—" she hesitated a second, then added—"fraud. And now, uncle, I would not for anything in the world have Philip know I am alive. Let him marry that little girl—Miss Lane—if he will. But I doubt if he will. I think his ambition is now more than anything to him, and that he will wish to marry a society woman, so that he can entertain and bring himself well to the front."

There was a shade of bitterness in her tone as she spoke.

"But if he should come to wish to marry *you*?" he hazarded.

"I would not marry him if he were the only *man* in the world," she said.

At the time she believed what she said.

CHAPTER XXIX

“A DANIEL INDEED!”

DAN WEBSTER had never found Vine Cottage, Dulwich, quite so depressing as after he returned there from his last visit to Hastings. He had not gone straight home, but had made a short stay in London on his way.

The house was as usual, clean, and oh! most terribly tidy!

“A place for everything, and everything in its place,” ought to have been put up as a motto over the front door, Dan often remarked.

Mrs. Webster, in plain black cashmere gown, a white ice-wool shawl, and an immaculate widow’s cap, sat in her accustomed corner in the fireplace, knitting socks. Miss Linkin, her elder sister, sat bolt upright near the window, sewing. The two women were as much in their places as the furniture, Dan always said.

The yellow and white cat, too, was exactly in its own place on the hearthrug, opposite the middle ornament of the fender.

The *Church Times* lay upon a small table near Mrs. Webster’s elbow, together with the familiar big smelling bottle which had a collection of round balls in it in some mysterious liquid.

The family at Vine Cottage used the same room to eat in and sit in. It was larger than the small drawing-room behind, which only commanded a view of the vegetable garden and Dan’s studio.

From the dining-room there was a view of the road, which Miss Linkin appreciated, because she elected to sit by the window in the afternoon. Her mornings were consecrated to domestic affairs. Mrs. Webster, in her capacity of invalid, did nothing but sit and knit, except on her "better days," when she would go as far as the Dulwich picture gallery—or if it were a Sunday, to church. Isabel usually lent her mother an arm to church, and Mrs. Webster never failed to remark in an injured voice: "My son ought to be doing this. Never make a mixed marriage, Isabel; it is so inconvenient to have your children brought up in different religions. I did think that perhaps, after your father died, Dan would change over and become Protestant."

And Isabel would invariably reply: "I don't see that the Catholic faith is any worse than the Protestant; moreover, I should have thought less of Dan if he had 'changed over.'"

It was twilight when Dan reached home, but the lamp in the dining-room had not yet been lit.

Dan, entering at the small wooden gate, saw the familiar face of Miss Linkin at the window. He had known that he should see it, just as certainly as he should see the cottage.

He came into the dining-room in his usual breezy fashion, flinging down a coat and a bag, and kissing his mother affectionately and asking after her health, then giving a "duty" kiss to Miss Linkin, who observed that his moustache was all wet with dew, and afterwards, with the air of protest, removed the coat and the bag to the passage outside.

"Oh, Aunt Lizzie!" exclaimed Dan a moment too late, "why didn't you let me do that?"

"It is no good expecting you to be tidy, Dan," she

answered with a sigh which bore a strong resemblance to a groan.

"I *am* an untidy beggar," acknowledged Dan cheerfully, "I am incurable, I fear. But, oh, I am so hungry!"

"The meal will be ready at half-past six," said Miss Linkin, with an air of finality.

"But if the dear boy is hungry—" put in Mrs. Webster plaintively.

"And if he is, he will make a raid on the pantry, Aunt Lizzie," Dan said with a comically solemn air.

This was not to be endured. Dan's raids upon the pantry were not unknown experiences in the term of years Miss Linkin had officiated in the capacity of housekeeper.

Miss Linkin instantly "made tracks," as Dan expressed it, for the kitchen, where a middle-aged, expressionless servant was putting plates and dishes on the rack to warm.

"Mr. Dan would like supper hurried on," Miss Linkin explained, as she drew a jug of beer from a small barrel and carried it herself to the dining-room.

"Good for you, auntie!" exclaimed Dan, reaching a tumbler out of the sideboard. "This will keep me going till supper."

"Isabel is dining with the head mistress of the James Allen School to-night, Dan," Mrs. Webster remarked as Dan set down his tumbler. "You might fetch her home if you are not too tired. You know the house in Rosendale Road?"

Yes, of course Dan knew it, and he would be delighted to fetch Isabel.

Mary Ann, the old servant, appeared to lay the

table, and Dan went out to his studio, where he lit the gas fire. He had had gas laid on, though lamps were chiefly used at Vine Cottage.

The studio was constructed of wood, which was done over with brown Stockholm tar, and there was a brick recess at one end for the gas stove, and a chimney to carry off fumes.

This studio looked inviting, in spite of its untidiness. There was an air of comfort about it, though everything in it was shabby. The wicker lounge-chairs were roomy and softly cushioned. The big, faded Eastern rug before the fire was still a charming bit of color, as were the leopard skins. The walls were covered with pictures and sketches. Easels, quaint old tables, and a book-case completed the furniture, except for an old divan, which Dan had picked up at a sale, and on which he not unfrequently passed the night.

An agreeable (to Dan) odor of stale tobacco and turpentine permeated the atmosphere.

Dan listened for the cart that was to bring his remaining luggage. It was his "Madonna" he was most anxious to get, and unpack. He had made up his mind to make a copy of it for himself before sending the original to the church.

He would have a free fortnight before he went to a friend's studio in Chelsea to paint the portrait of a society woman, who was not a beauty, but who was immensely rich. Stanley Browne always allowed Dan to share his studio, for they had been fellow-students in old Paris days and had kept up a close friendship.

Miss Linkin put her head in at the door. It was a remarkable head. The face was long, narrow, and faded, and the grey hair was parted in the middle

and brushed flat on the temples, where it suddenly became two stiff corkscrew curls. These two curls on either side, bobbed up and down when she nodded, which she did very often, being given to that mode of emphasis.

The pale blue eyes were still bright and looked almost out of place in the wrinkled setting. The mob cap, stiff and ornamented with stiff bows of lavender ribbon, completed the picture the firelight revealed.

"Your luggage is come, Dan," she said; "but I *beg* of you don't begin to unpack now, I have arranged for supper to be earlier."

Dan rushed out to receive his beloved picture, and having seen it deposited in the studio, went in to supper.

"A Colonel Lane called here this morning, to know if you were back," said Mrs. Webster over supper. "Who is he?"

"A great friend of the Barrimores," said Dan. "He is a real good sort."

"A Catholic, I suppose?" said Miss Linkin disagreeably.

"No, he is a Protestant," answered Dan.

"I am glad to hear that you number a man who is a Protestant among your friends," said his aunt.

Dan laughed. "Why, really, aunt," he exclaimed, "nearly all my friends *are* Protestants! I have been painting a portrait, however, of the most beautiful woman the world holds, and *she* is a Catholic."

The sisters exchanged alarmed glances.

If Dan had fallen in love! This would indeed be a blow! It had been bad enough that he had taken up painting as a profession, when he might have done something that would have given them all a decent

income; but to fall in love—possibly to marry!—that was a calamity indeed!

“Beauty is only skin deep,” said Miss Linkin.

“Oh, but *such* a skin!” ejaculated Dan aggravatingly.

Miss Linkin sniffed.

Mrs. Webster sighed.

“Such eyes!” went on Dan; “such hair!—and above all, such a divine expression!”

“Don’t you be taken in by all that, Dan!” broke out Miss Linkin. “I dare say she is a designing young minx!”

“And such a figure!” went on Dan teasingly.

“Squeezed in, I suppose,” said Miss Linkin. “Men always admire thin waists; why, I can’t think!”

“Her waist isn’t thin,” said Dan.

“What is her name?” demanded Miss Linkin.

“Aimée Le Breton,” replied Dan.

“Oh! a Frenchwoman!” cried Miss Linkin. “They are the worst of all.”

“She is of French Canadian stock,” said Dan, “but she is to all intents and purposes an Englishwoman.”

“She can’t be!” contradicted Miss Linkin. “Don’t you talk such rubbish, Daniel.”

“You always say I can talk nothing else, auntie,” Dan reminded her, “and now, if mother and you will excuse me, I will hurry up and unpack my picture before going to meet Isabel; and, Aunt Lizzie, you can let me have all the bills to-morrow morning. I am as rich as a Jew!—anyway, I feel so. I have done uncommonly well, and everyone of you must have new frocks.”

“Thank you, Daniel,” said Miss Linkin freezingly; “but I pray you not to include *me*. I have my own income.”

Poor Miss Linkin! she possessed a pound a week, all her own, left to her by an old school friend.

"Oh! I forgot for the moment, auntie, that you were the moneyed member of the family. But anyway, you must let me give you a present."

"*Save* your money, Daniel," said Miss Linkin, with big emphasis on the verb. "Your eyes may go wrong again."

This was too much for Dan. He fled to unpack his picture, lest he should say something he might regret.

Miss Linkin nodded at the closed door, and her corkscrew curls wobbled.

"That boy always lets his money burn holes in his pocket," she remarked to her sister.

CHAPTER XXX

SUCH IS LOVE!

"It is too lovely for words!" cried Isabel, her eyes fixed on her brother's picture of the Madonna.

They were in the studio after coming back from Rosendale Road. Mrs. Webster had retired for the night, and Miss Linkin was waiting up to see "lights out," an aggravating habit she had (according to Dan).

"And is Miss Le Breton really as beautiful as that, Dan?" asked Isabel, "or have you idealized her?"

"It is a portrait—a *bonâ-fide* portrait," answered Dan, his eyes fixed on the lovely picture. "I have often asked myself what gave that look to her eyes. There is sorrow there. There is submission to sorrow. There is, too, *peace*. How came that look? There is a mystery about Miss Le Breton. I heard that she was for years mentally unsound. This I cannot believe. She is intellectual above the ordinary, and absolutely normal. There must have been some reason for the false report being set afoot. Sometimes I have thought it might be to keep away suitors. Her mother and her uncle are so passionately fond of her. But that idea of mine is absurd, after all, for being so attached to the girl, they would not wish to damage her reputation. There is, as I say, a mystery."

"Is her father dead?" asked Isabel.

"Ah, that is a sad part of the story that *is* known," said Dan. "Her father was Eweretta Alvin's father.

Poor Aimée Le Breton is illegitimate. It is said that the half-sisters were so exactly alike that they might well be mistaken for one another. But Philip Barrimore, who should know, says there is a difference, and that Miss Le Breton, though amazingly like Miss Alvin, could not possibly be mistaken for her."

"Do you think Mr. Barrimore is getting over Miss Alvin's death?" asked Isabel, her eyes still on the picture.

"Yes, I certainly do," affirmed Dan. "It is surprising, after the fearful hullabaloo he made at first. Do you know, Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Burns absolutely refused to let Philip go to Beachy Head, for fear he should throw himself over the cliff! Now he talks of Eweretta without emotion. He talks to Miss Le Breton, who is so like her, without emotion."

"Such is love!" sighed Isabel.

"Are you ever coming?" Miss Linkin called from the back door.

"All right, aunt," Dan called back.

"But it isn't all right," Miss Linkin protested. "It is time everyone was in bed, and it's wasting gas to no purpose."

"We had best go in, Dan," said Isabel, sighing.

She had so longed for a long talk with her brother.

"Never mind, old girl," answered Dan in a comforting way. "I'll get up and walk to school with you, and we can finish out talk then."

Isabel smiled. "It is good to have you home again!" she told him.

"Put the gas fire out!" called Miss Linkin.

"All right!" shouted Dan. "You will take cold, aunt, standing at the door!"

"How annoying she is!" he added.

"Oh, never mind," Isabel rejoined. "She has been so good, looking after us all. It has been wonderful the way she has always kept us out of debt; and she does look after mother so beautifully."

The brother and sister entered the house arm in arm, like the chums they were, and Isabel flew upstairs. Dan went into the dining-room, blundering over the furniture in the dark, and finally sprawling over something on the hearth.

"What *are* you doing!" cried Miss Linkin, arriving with a candle.

"Barking my shins, if you want to know," replied Dan crossly. "Look here! what is that hearthrug rolled up like that for, just ready to throw anyone down?"

"No one was expected to go in here again to-night," announced Miss Linkin. "What do you want out of this room? All your luggage is upstairs."

"I left some of my beer in the jug," Dan explained.

"Yes, Daniel, and you stuffed your table-napkin in the top, and it is all soaked in beer."

"Never mind, auntie! But where is the jug? It isn't on the sideboard."

"You will find it in the kitchen on the dresser, Daniel, but I fear it will be flat. Don't drink it if it is. Draw some more. Mary Ann is gone to bed."

"All right, auntie. You go to hush-a-by-by too. I'll be up in a few minutes."

"And *please*, Daniel, don't drop your boots on the floor with a bang when you take them off. You wake everyone up. And you will be careful to put the gas out in the kitchen when you come out."

"Oh, Lord!" muttered Dan, as he heard the faint creaking of the stairs that told him Aunt Lizzie had

retired for the night. "But she is a good sort, though she is such a worrier," he added, referring to his aunt.

As good as his word, Dan was up to accompany Isabel to the James Allen School, which is situated in Dulwich Grove, and they had one of their own "chummy" talks.

Dan boasted of his riches, and told Isabel that he was getting on so well that she would not need to teach.

She turned a bright face to him, exclaiming: "I won't give up my independence, Dan! And I love teaching—and just think what it would be to stay at home all day! I should soon become as fidgety as Aunt Lizzie! Dan, you must learn not to notice what she says. She is like Martha—'troubled about many things'; but I can't sufficiently admire her unselfish devotion. Lots of people can *say* nice things, but few people *do* as many nice things as Aunt Lizzie. She *will* renovate my gowns for me, and she takes no end of pains to make them look quite up-to-date. As to mother, she looks after her with a patience that would shame many so-called tender nurses."

"It is all true," agreed Dan, "but she is an aggravater, all the same. Do you know, when I leave you at the school, I shall go into Sydney Grove and see Colonel Lane. It is quite close. Did you see him when he called? He is an awfully nice old fellow. His daughter is staying with the Barrimores while he is here."

"No, I was not at home when he called," said Isabel. "But you must ask him in to supper, and we can go to the studio afterwards."

"Just what I was intending to do," he answered. "And to revert to gowns—you have got to let me

give you a nice 'rig' for the winter—a frock, and hat, and some furs. We will go to Jones and Higgins' shop at Peckham on Saturday."

Isabel protested.

"I never argue," he told her. "I am the master, recollect, and I am in funds. You will have to advise me what to get for mother too. I am determined to make Aunt Lizzie have something. I shall tell her that if she doesn't, I'll make a frightful mess with my bath every morning and refuse to rub my shoes when I come in."

"That ought to have its effect," laughed Isabel. "But here we are at the school, so good-bye till to-night."

Dan made his way to Sydney Grove, and Colonel Lane was delighted to see him.

"You must come and chat to Henderson," he said. "It will do him a lot of good. He is really better."

It was true that Colonel Henderson was better. The visit of his friend had prolonged his life, as by a miracle. Colonel Lane had tactfully gained over Mrs. Henderson completely, and had delicately introduced much comfort into the poor home.

Thanks to a big cheque from Mr. Burns, great changes had been made in the house. Also a carriage had been hired on fine days, and the invalid had been carried to it, and enjoyed the drives really wonderfully.

The miserable garden, laid waste by the boys, had been put in order, so the outlook was no longer depressing.

Mrs. Henderson had become quite cheerful under the happier state of things, and absolutely worshipped Colonel Lane.

Poor woman! her own health had not been good

since her stay in India, and what with her poverty, her husband's illness, her difficulty in dealing with the boys, her life had not been all roses.

Colonel Lane had proved more capable of managing the boys than of managing his own girl. He liked them, too. They were healthy, bright, mischievous boys, with plenty of ability.

Both were overjoyed at the prospect of Sandhurst. It had all been arranged by Mr. Burns. They were to have their chance.

Dan stayed at the Hendersons' about half an hour, and obtained Colonel Lane's promise to dine at Vine Cottage the following evening. "Supper" would be converted into "dinner" for the occasion.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE COLONEL GOES AGAIN "ON DUTY"

COLONEL LANE and Dan Webster were in the studio of the latter, enjoying an after-dinner cigar. Isabel was correcting school-books in the dining-room under difficulties, but she had promised to go out to the studio when her work was finished.

Colonel Lane sipped his whisky meditatively between his puffs, and Dan saw clearly that he had something to say, which he considered important, and was seeking for words to express himself.

At last the Colonel spoke: "I am a little uneasy about Phyllis, Webster. Mrs. Barrimore wrote me that she was piqued and not well. Did *you* notice anything?"

Dan's eyes smiled out of an immovable countenance. He knocked the ash off his cigar before replying.

Then he said, rather unexpectedly: "I think Miss Lane looked a little—cross about something. That was all I noticed."

"Cross, was she?" jerked out the Colonel. "Well, I know that symptom. It means that she imagines herself in love again. Have you an idea who it is this time?"

Dan opened his eyes wide. Really the Colonel had more penetration than he had given him credit for.

Colonel Lane went on without waiting for a reply: "Phyllis has been in and out of love so much that I

have been kept in a ferment. It would be a comfort to get her safely married. Young Langridge—you never met him, I think?—young Langridge would have kept a firm hand on her; but she wouldn't marry him, though she had, I must own, led him on shamefully if she meant to refuse him. I personally preferred young Arbuthnot, but he would have yielded to Phyllis in everything, and Phyllis would have given him trouble. You see, Webster, when a girl is continually falling in love with a fresh man, it does not always end when she marries. If I had believed that Phyllis would have *kept* in love with Arbuthnot, I would have consented to that match. I was right in refusing, for now there *is* someone else. Who is it, Webster? Not you, I know, for I hear that she treated you with coldness."

Dan laughed boyishly.

"No, Colonel. It certainly was not I," he said. "But can't you guess?"

"No! I'm damned if I can!" broke out the Colonel irritably.

"Have you never thought of Philip?"

"Philip!" roared the Colonel. "Impossible!"

"Why?" asked Dan. "You surely know that Philip has got over Eweretta's loss?"

"Yes, I do know it!" acknowledged the Colonel. "He got over it mighty quickly! But I wouldn't have him for a son-in-law for anything! Conceited, domineering fellow that he is! Look how he treats his mother and his uncle! He patronizes and snubs them by turns. You don't mean—you can't mean that there is anything really in your suggestion?"

"I do, though!" affirmed Dan. "Phyllis—I mean Miss Lane—is constantly at the bungalow. I think

they had a 'tiff,' and I think that is at the bottom of the trouble."

"That decides me to go home at once," said the Colonel. "Henderson has turned the corner, for the time, at any rate—and you, like a good fellow, will run in and see him sometimes, won't you? Yes, I must go and put a stop to this infernal business!"

Dan was rather alarmed. He had, without intending it, put a spark to a powder magazine. He hastened to try to smooth matters.

"I ought not to have said what I did; really it is only conjecture on my part. I may be quite wrong. I wouldn't make a disturbance, if I were you—pardon me for saying it!—till I was *very* sure."

"My dear boy, I am going to make very sure. Oh! you don't know what it is to have a girl like Phyllis to manage—such a born coquette!"

"She did not behave like one as far as I was concerned," Dan remarked with boyish candor. "She was very sweet to me while my eyes were wrong, but afterwards she put me in my place, I can assure you. She was in the same house with me, and seeing me all the time, but she never willingly talked to me. She was discreet almost to the point of primness."

The entrance of Isabel put a stop to the conversation at this point.

"At last I am free!" laughed Isabel. "Oh, but it has been difficult to correct those books! Aunt Lizzie has been wrapping up all our poor little show of silver in white tissue paper, and she got a big lens to examine each article to see if Mary Ann had scratched it, and every now and then she would say: 'Look at this, Isabel! Isn't this a scratch?'"

Dan pushed his sister down into a comfortable wicker chair, telling her that she was now in the land

of liberty, where glorious untidiness reigned supreme.

Isabel glanced round with bright, merry eyes.

"This is the other extreme. Don't you think so, Colonel Lane? Here a little of Aunt Lizzie's law and order would not come amiss."

"Wouldn't it?" cried Dan. "No serpent of ungodly tidiness shall enter my paradise!"

"I think the studio looks tidy enough," commented Colonel Lane baldly. (He was thinking of Phyllis and this new intolerable complication.)

"But you are a man, you see!" Isabel reminded him. "Look at that packing-case on a chair; that heap of paper on the floor; that open chest with its bulging contents—and cigar ash everywhere."

"I am happy. That is the main point," asserted Dan. "And sometimes I have a grand clear-up!"

"That is the worst mess of all!" Isabel assured the Colonel. "If you could only see Dan doing this grand 'clear-up,' you would not forget it. But, tell me, have you admired the 'Madonna'?"

Colonel Lane had not even looked at it till now, and Dan had been disappointed, for he had put it in a good light, hoping to hear the Colonel exclaim something laudatory.

But now that the soldier did look, he was so struck with admiration, that at first he could say nothing; and when he did speak, it was not to compliment the young painter in the ordinary fashion.

"I don't think I ever saw such a pure expression," he said, gazing intently at the picture. "I think it is the best conception of the Blessed Virgin that I ever saw. To my mind, all the big painters have failed to paint the soul of the Virgin Mother. Here it is: love, sorrow, and infinite peace."

"Say no more!" cried Dan. "Leave it there! That is what I saw in the face of Aimée Le Breton."

Then Colonel Lane fell into ordinary compliment. "You are a great painter, Webster," he said. "You not only see, but you can put on record what you see."

Dan was filled with a wild joy. This was indeed praise. He knew, too, that Colonel Lane was the kind of man who never said more than he meant.

The young painter began instantly to build castles in Spain—such castles!

Ah! they would all see some day that he had made no mistake when he had chosen Art for a career.

"What are you going to do with it?" inquired the Colonel.

"Give it to a church," answered Dan.

"But *surely* you will exhibit it first?" said the Colonel.

Dan had never thought of it! Why not?

If the picture could be hung in the Academy, or the "New," then would it be a more worthy thanksgiving offering.

Perhaps, too, "Our Lady" would bring the young painter good fortune!

Dan, for a reason scarcely consciously formulated in his mind, but perfectly understood by his mother and Aunt Lizzie, wanted now to make a big name—to grow rich.

"I am so glad you suggested that, Colonel!" Dan said. "It had never come into my mind. You see, I had resolved, if my eyes got well, to give a 'Madonna' to a church I am fond of. I painted my best, because I would only offer my best. But I owe all to Miss

Le Breton—for being what she is, and for being so sweet as to sit to me.”

Colonel Lane's severe face softened as he looked at the frank, boyish face.

“My dear Webster, you are as free from vanity as Philip is full of it. Don't get ‘swelled head’ when you get famous—as you will!”

“I will try not to,” laughed Dan; “but I am not famous yet!”

Isabel looked at the Colonel with shining eyes, full of gratitude. She was so glad to hear her brother encouraged. She knew, perhaps better than anyone else, the struggle the young man had had. She had seen his despair when his eyes went wrong. She had known that Miss Linkin and Mrs. Webster had added to his weight of sorrow by assuring him that his own wilfulness had brought its punishment.

“Do you really believe that Dan will become famous?” she asked the Colonel, in order to lead him on to further words of encouragement, for his opinion had been clearly enough expressed.

“I don't *think* at all,” asserted the Colonel. “I am sure!”

“Dan! Dan!” cried Isabel. “Do you hear that? And it is true—I feel it is true. I wish I could see Miss Le Breton; I would give her a real hug. I feel I love her for the gift of—what she is.”

“You will see her, I hope,” said Dan. “Mrs. Barrimore is most anxious for you to go to Hawk's Nest for your next holiday. I promised for you.”

“You must go,” put in the Colonel. “Mrs. Barrimore would give you a good time. She is the very sweetest woman on earth—isn't she, Webster?”

“Mrs. Barrimore is goodness and sweetness personified,” assented Dan.

When Colonel Lane was walking to East Dulwich later, along the solitary road, he found himself recalling Isabel's face and figure. He had not thought he had observed her closely, but now found that no detail had escaped him. There was nothing to suggest the school teacher in the slim, well-garbed girl. There was a freshness about her, as if she lived out of doors, and the scent of sweet meadows clung to her. Her eyes were blue as Dan's and set far apart. Her face, broad at the forehead, narrowed to a small, pointed chin. It was almost a round face, and looked wonderfully child-like. Her brown hair was abundant, and was coiled simply upon her well-shaped head. These things he had noted, but it had been the honesty of Isabel's eyes that had unconsciously caused him to record the rest.

"Miss Webster is a good woman," he decided, "and she is young—but little older than Phyllis. I hope they may become friends. It might be that Phyllis would be influenceable by that girl."

Phyllis! His thoughts darted painfully back to her. He loved her with a great love, yet he had to appear hard. Perhaps he had been too hard on her, he thought regretfully, but her motherless condition had seemed to call for greater strictness on his part.

He questioned himself with severity as he strode along the Half Moon Lane. Where had he been most at fault regarding the upbringing of Phyllis?

Probably his great mistake had been in sending her to that private highly-recommended boarding school at Brighton. There had been a scandal about one of the teachers, who had been much attached to Phyllis. The scandal had occurred just after Phyllis had left the school. It had resulted in the withdrawal of a number of pupils.

Yes, the Colonel decided, it was at this school that Phyllis had learned her coquetry.

But this affair with Philip Barrimore must certainly be put a stop to for every reason. His own love for Philip's mother made the whole business ridiculous. Then again, Philip would be the most impossible husband for a flighty girl like Phyllis.

Certainly to-morrow he must go back to Hastings.

CHAPTER XXXII

UNCLE ROBERT IS EFFECTIVELY DAMPED

WHEN Colonel Lane arrived at Hawk's Nest, he found the place *en fête*. "Wings and Winds" had come out and there was a general jubilation.

A pile of dainty green volumes stood upon the dining-room table, and Uncle Robert was uncorking champagne.

Colonel Lane had not advised his friends of his coming, as he had a sort of Sherlock Holmes idea that he might make a discovery or two by coming without warning.

"Bravo!" shouted Uncle Robert, putting down the bottle, that he might grasp his friend's hand. "This is a pleasant surprise; and you are just in time to join us in a glass to 'Wings and Winds.'"

In nervous haste, Uncle Robert pounced upon one of the green volumes, opening it at the title page to show to his friend, who was now holding Annie Barimore's hand between his own two, and looking at her in that tender, adoring way, which never failed to call up the pretty girlish blush.

"Look! my boy!" cried Uncle Robert, beaming and swelling with pride, "Isn't it nicely produced?"

"Wings and Winds.

"By Robert Burns.

Take it in your hand man! Uncut edges, you see, and beautiful paper!"

Colonel Lane took the little volume and admired it, while the proud author struggled with the wire on a "magnum."

All at once Phyllis, who had run to Philip in the smoking-room to inform him that her father had come, plucked at the parental sleeve.

"We didn't expect you, dad," she said, using that rapid manner of speech which was an indication in her case of excitement.

Colonel Lane kissed his daughter, noting with anxiety that she was certainly not looking well, also that her eyes did not meet his. His face softened as he looked at her, but changed and became severe when Philip came in wearing a patronizing smile.

"Ah, Colonel!" he said, as he extended a hand. "You are come at the right moment to congratulate the author of 'Wings and Winds.'"

For Mrs. Barrimore's sake Colonel Lane gave his hand to Philip with a show of friendliness, but the young man saw dislike in the fine, stern face.

"Very nicely got up, isn't it?" Philip next said, as he took up one of the volumes.

Opening it haphazard, he conned a page, while an amused smile played about his mouth.

Colonel Lane eyed him with marked disfavor.

"Got to run the gauntlet of reviewers yet, though," Philip remarked.

"I am not afraid of reviewers," blurted out Uncle Robert, who had succeeded in opening the bottle, and was filling the glasses. "I am not going to let the thought of a man in an iron mask spoil to-night's pleasure. But the proverb says, 'He who talks of happiness summons grief,' so we will not talk of it. Drink to the success of 'Wings and Winds!'"

Every glass was raised.

Mrs. Barrimore was standing by the Colonel, and when the toast had been drunk, she said to him: "Now you must have a meal, and you will stay here to-night, won't you? Mrs. Ransom will not have made any preparations."

"Of course he will stay!" exclaimed Uncle Robert. "We are going to make a night of it, eh, Lane?"

Philip went back to the smoking-room, the little volume in his hand, and after a moment Phyllis followed him.

"It's awful rot, you know!" said Philip, indicating the book of verse.

"Oh, don't say that!" answered Phyllis. "Mr. Burns is so happy about it."

"He won't be very happy when he reads the reviews, however," said Philip. "Look here! He rhymes *home* with *throne*. Listen, did you ever read such drivel?"

"Where are joys like those of home?
I would not change them for a throne,
I have no wish afar to rove,
When here I find a home and love.'"

"I think it is very pretty," said Phyllis, who liked Uncle Robert, and did not like to hear his work run down.

"That is because you are an ignorant little girl!" Philip told her, pinching her cheek.

Philip went on reading:

"*'I wandered through the dales of dawn.'* What are the 'dales of dawn'? Perhaps he means *at dawn*. *'My unaccustomed eyes fast set.'* Good heavens! 'fast set.' If he means fast shut, he ought to go on to describe how he came a cropper in the 'dales of dawn.' Well, all I hope is that the public

won't find out that the author of this idiotic drivel is my uncle!"

Philip and Phyllis had their backs to the open door. They did not see Uncle Robert transfixed on the threshold.

He had come in search of them, and—he *had heard!*

All the light had died out of his face when he stole away. He did not join his sister and Colonel Lane. He went out into the garden.

There was a frost, and the stars were shining.

But Uncle Robert, who loved nature in all her moods, did not note the sparkle upon the laurel bushes or the quiet splendor of the starlit sky.

He walked along the gravel path slowly and painfully, his eyes cast down. A copy of his book was in his breast pocket. He felt it there, as if a dead hand was laid upon his heart.

Was all that he had heard true? Philip was clever. He was a critic. Was this the kind of thing that would be said by reviewers of his little book? Would they all sneer and ridicule him?

"There is no fool like the old fool!" he told himself with a melancholy shake of the head. "I have learned a lesson."

The dry dead leaves on the big oak trees which bordered the croquet lawn seemed to Uncle Robert to whisper, "To-night will come a wind—a small wind, and we, nipped by frost, shall fall and be swept up by the gardener; we shall lie dead and forgotten on the rubbish heap. But *we* shall be the new green leaves, and we shall laugh in the spring sunshine and folks will say, 'Look at the new leaves!' They will not know that they are *we* come back!"

Uncle Robert laughed a little sadly as his imagination was stirred thus by the rustle of the dry leaves.

It had always been thus with him. Fancies came with every sound and sight of nature, and rhymes had followed—rhymes which he had just heard called “drivel.”

And even now, in the realization that he had failed to give the songs expression which he heard in his heart, something sang still. He could still *hear* the voices of nature. That was left to him.

Oddly enough, he felt no animus against Philip for his brutal criticism. Philip had the critical gift, which had made his own work so perfect in its way.

Uncle Robert accepted the verdict he had heard. He had no vanity. It was only joy he had felt in seeing his rhymes in print—joy such as a child feels over a sand castle which is to him wonderful.

The joy was gone. He was like the child who has seen a big wave wash his wonderful castle away—and he could have wept!

Colonel Lane was eating a meal in the dining-room and Annie Barrimore was with him.

She was speaking of Robert's book, her shining eyes expressing the pleasure she felt.

“It is so good to see him so glad,” she was saying. “He has been giving joy to others all his life, and has now the thing he so desired. I do hope the critics will be kind.”

“I hope that Philip will hold his tongue,” said the Colonel with some asperity, remembering the expression he had noted on that young man's face.

Mrs. Barrimore looked troubled. “You do Philip an injustice, dear friend,” she said. “He would not say anything to grieve his uncle, when he sees him so happy about the book.”

"I hope not," replied the Colonel shortly.

Mrs. Barrimore was always a little hurt when Colonel Lane spoke of her boy in that tone of voice. This dear friend—who was so very dear—certainly did not understand Philip.

Colonel Lane was thinking how very blind some adoring mothers could be. He saw he had hurt her, and was sorry. To hurt so gentle a creature was to his soldier-heart like shooting a flower.

He laid a hand on hers and said: "Let us give Robert a good time. He said we must make a night of it. We will ask him to read some of his verses aloud to us."

Mrs. Barrimore smiled up at him. "That is a very sweet thought of yours," she said gratefully. "We will all go to the drawing-room. There is a lovely fire, and we have not yet had our coffee. We dined rather earlier to-night, and thought it would be nice to have our coffee later. I will go and fetch Robert. I saw him go out into the garden. You find Philip and Phyllis, and make them go to the drawing-room. By the way, how do you think Phyllis is looking?"

"We will talk of Phyllis later, dear," he said.

Uncle Robert, who had conquered himself to some degree, entered at that moment, and taking his sister's arm, led her to the drawing-room; where the others joined them almost immediately.

"Now, Burns!" said the Colonel heartily. "You said we were to make a night of it! We all want you to read us some of your verses aloud."

A crooked smile passed over Uncle Robert's face as he stammered: "No, Lane. I think not. We have had enough of the book for to-night. I have been behaving like a foolish schoolboy who has carried

home his first prize. Annie and Phyllis shall play and sing to us. Annie, old girl, can you sing some of those old songs we used to have at home?"

Philip looked up sharply at his uncle. He saw plainly that something was amiss, but never dreamed what it was. He felt sorry, for he was fond of his uncle, if he thought little of his poetry.

"Do read us some of the verses, uncle," he said.

Mr. Burns fixed his eyes on his nephew. "You should not ask me," was all he said.

There was an odd dignity about Uncle Robert as he spoke the brief sentence, which escaped no one's observation; and everyone, including the culprit himself, felt sure that some wound was at the bottom of it.

Colonel Lane had no doubt whatever that some sneer of Philip's had been noticed by his uncle, and that he was deeply hurt.

Both Philip and Phyllis arrived at the truth.

"Can he have heard?" whispered Phyllis to Philip.

"It looks like it. I am horribly sorry," Philip whispered back.

Colonel Lane, in his Sherlock Holmes capacity, noted the guarded whispers with growing wrath.

When Philip rang for his horse to be got ready, Colonel Lane stepped up to him and said icily: "I am coming to call on you to-morrow at four o'clock; mind you are at home."

"Delighted, I am sure," replied Philip, attempting a smile, which succeeded only in being a grimace.

"What the devil is up now, I wonder!" muttered Philip, as he rode away. "Lane is undoubtedly on the war-path. I wonder if he knows anything about my criticism of that infernal book? I did not lower my voice—damn it!"

But Philip heartily wished he had kept his opinions to himself. Uncle Robert was such a good sort. He had been so kind, so generous! Philip cursed himself for a cad.

All the same, he was not prepared to accept a lecture from Colonel Lane—the man who had the infernal impudence to be in love with the mother of a grown-up son!

CHAPTER XXXIII

DAMNING EVIDENCE

THE morning after Colonel Lane arrived so unexpectedly at Hawk's Nest, he made a false move.

Determined to put a stop to the visits of Miss Phyllis to the bungalow at Gissing, he got up early and took the young lady's cycle home, and locking it in a shed, removed the key. His own cycle was also kept in the shed, and so were the carpentering tools with which he occasionally amused himself. But there was no reason for anyone except himself and Phyllis ever to go there.

It was before breakfast that Colonel Lane locked up the cycle. He saw Mrs. Ransom, who was much amazed, not to say a little frightened, to see him at that hour. She was a quiet, reserved woman, with a good housekeeping faculty—and no other. She was singularly lacking in feminine curiosity, too, so when Colonel Lane told her that if Miss Phyllis asked for the key of the shed she was to say he had it, she did not even ask herself why the place was to be locked in the daytime.

The Colonel said he was going to breakfast at Hawk's Nest and then would be home. Miss Phyllis would be home in the afternoon.

As soon as breakfast was over (it was at a later hour now, as Uncle Robert no longer went for his morning swim), Colonel Lane went home and Phyllis did her packing.

After luncheon Phyllis said good-bye and went to get her cycle, when she was told by the gardener that her father had taken it home before breakfast.

Phyllis bit her lip with vexation. She had fully meant to cycle over to see Philip before going home, and she knew quite well that her father had done this thing to prevent any chance of such a proceeding. If she went home her father would keep her there.

She made up her mind to outwit him.

Taking a tram, she went down to the Memorial, and thence on foot to a shop where she knew she could hire a cycle.

So it happened that soon after three o'clock she presented herself at the bungalow.

She knew nothing of the arrangement her father had made to be there at four o'clock.

Philip was out, Davis said, so Phyllis put her cycle in the stable and made herself comfortable by the fire to wait, removing her hat. As it got near four o'clock she went to the window, and to her horror saw her father cycling up the road.

In a panic she ran to the kitchen and told the astonished Davis on no account to let her father know she was there, then fled into Philip's bedroom, and shut the door, scarcely daring to breathe.

She heard her father come in, and then Philip.

"No, I am not disposed to shake hands, Philip, till we have had a little conversation," she heard her father say.

In fact, she heard all that followed.

Philip knew from this opening remark that he had not been mistaken in supposing that Colonel Lane was "on the war-path."

"As you like, sir," he replied coldly.

"There is something between you and Phyllis.

that you have been keeping secret," went on the Colonel.

Philip paled.

Had the Colonel discovered the secret marriage? and did he think Philip had been a party to it? It was quite possible. The wonder was that it had not all come out before, considering that it was duly registered in St. Clement's Church.

"Your face tells me that I am right," went on the Colonel.

Philip was silent. He wanted to find out how much the Colonel knew.

"It is absolutely disgraceful!" thundered the soldier, "and unworthy of a gentleman, this conduct of yours."

Philip was now furious. He cursed the folly of women, and of Phyllis in particular, but he was not going to give her away.

"These secret meetings at the bungalow—would any man of honor so lower himself as to permit them?" demanded the Colonel.

"I will not tolerate such language even from you!" broke out Philip. "I have done nothing dishonorable!"

"You will listen to just what I choose to say," rejoined the Colonel. "I will put a stop to all this once and for all. You should not marry my daughter if there were not another man in the world—understand that!"

"And why not?" asked Philip, who now saw daylight. "If I wanted to—why not? What have you against me?"

"Everything, sir! everything!" rejoined the Colonel. "When was my daughter last here?"

"Last week, I think," replied Philip.

He then caught sight of the hat Phyllis had thrown on a chair and forgotten in her haste to hide herself.

"The little fool!" he said inwardly, as he moved himself so as to hide the chair. "She is here!"

It was this movement of Philip's which was his undoing.

Colonel Lane's eyes followed it; and he saw the hat.

"So," he said with contempt, "you add lying to your other accomplishments! There is her hat! Where have you hidden her?"

Philip was too dumbfounded to answer.

The Colonel strode towards the bedroom door.

Philip intercepted him. He was now sure that silly Phyllis was there, and he feared that her father in his present mood would forget that his daughter was no longer a child and might thrash her.

Colonel Lane took a pace back, his arms folded.

"Phyllis!", he called. "Come out of that room immediately!"

Then violent sobbing made itself heard from behind the door.

"Say what you like to me, sir," said Philip, his back still against the door, "but don't be hard on Phyllis. She is such a child!"

"The more shame to you!" roared the Colonel, "for so taking advantage of her innocence. Move away, and let her obey her father."

"Let me come out, Philip!" sobbed Phyllis.

Philip moved away from the door, the handle of which he had kept gripped tightly till then.

Phyllis, her hair fallen from its securing pins, her face blurred with weeping, entered the room.

"Philip didn't know I was here. Indeed he did

not!" she cried. "He is the best friend I have, and you want to separate us! I am miserable; I am a most wretched girl, and if you knew everything you would pity me!"

"Fiddlesticks!" replied the Colonel unkindly.

He had seen Phyllis weeping and despairing before.

"Philip does not want to marry me. It is all a mistake!" sobbed Phyllis. "He *could* not marry me if he wished to ever so."

"Is she going to confess?" thought Philip. "I hope to goodness she is!"

But she was not.

"I suppose Philip has a wife already that he is ashamed to own to, then? That is what your words imply."

"Oh, no! no!" cried Phyllis.

"Think you have said too much, eh?" sneered the Colonel. "Go and wash your face and do your hair, and come home. You have evidently got a cycle from somewhere."

"You will be sorry some day for the injustice you have done me, sir," Philip said, thinking only of himself and the false position into which the folly of Phyllis had placed him. He had taken her part, but he was intensely angry with her. He wished he had never seen her.

Of course, his mother and Mr. Burns would hear the Colonel's version, and he, Philip, would be unable to defend himself, because he had promised Phyllis to keep her secret. It was intolerable!

When Phyllis was going away she cast an imploring glance at him for sympathy, but he turned his head away.

After his visitors had gone, Philip was so angry and so upset that he could not stay indoors. He took

his hat and strode across the field towards the White House.

He had no conscious intention to go there, but finding himself at the gate, he entered.

He must get a change of some sort. That idiotic little Phyllis had spoiled all chance of work for him. He felt in great need of sympathy.

It was Pierre who admitted him, and great was his surprise to find, not the bulky Colonial as he had expected, but Miss Le Breton having tea alone.

"Bring another cup, Pierre," Eweretta said, with great self-possession, when she had given her hand to Philip. "I am sorry, Mr. Barrimore, but both my mother and my uncle have driven into Hastings," she said calmly, "but I expect them back any moment now."

She sat at the little tea-table, a beautiful, composed figure, in a closely-fitting dark blue dress. She seemed to create an atmosphere of peace around her. The bright firelight made purple glints in her black hair.

"You will find me a dull companion, I fear, Miss Le Breton," Philip said lamely. "I don't know why I came. I have had a very unpleasant quarter of an hour with Colonel Lane."

She looked inquiry.

"You see," he blurted out (he must speak), "Colonel Lane has got the idea I want to marry his daughter, and he is furious."

"And don't you?" she asked quietly.

"No! by heaven, I don't!" he answered with conviction; "besides, I couldn't if I wanted to."

She waited.

"Phyllis has got into a scrape; I can't tell you what, because I have promised to keep her secret.

She has treated me like a big brother, and come to me with her troubles. I have tried to help her, and this is my reward."

Eweretta looked her astonishment.

"Colonel Lane thinks I have got up a secret intrigue with the girl. He won't believe my word. There was no end of a row."

Eweretta filled a tea-cup which Pierre had brought, and passed it to Philip.

"I ought not to be telling you this," went on the young man, "but I have my weak moments like the rest."

"We all have weak moments, certainly," said Eweretta, "but I don't think they are always our worst."

"Don't you?" said Philip. "I should have thought you would have held different ideas. Your sister—your half-sister—despised weakness."

"Perhaps that was because she had always been happy," said Eweretta.

"Oh, I don't know," said Philip. "She was very different from you in many ways."

"Perhaps you are different from the Philip Barri-more she knew," said Eweretta.

"I am," said Philip. "I was a better fellow, I think, when she knew me. I was less selfish and hard, and—conceited!"

He laughed. Somehow it amused him to hear himself saying such things of himself.

As for Eweretta, she liked him better than she had done since the renewal of their acquaintance. But no more intimate talk was possible, for just then Mrs. Le Breton and Mr. Alvin returned.

Philip went soon afterwards, saying that he must pack a bag, as he intended running up to town.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE FLIGHT OF PHYLLIS

PHYLLIS LANE, on reaching home, went at once to bed. The next morning she did not come down, so Mrs. Ransom went up to her room—to find the door locked.

As she could get no answer, though she called a number of times, she informed the Colonel.

"Let her alone," he said. "She is in a temper, that is all. Let her stay all day. It will do her good."

Mrs. Ransom, who had had some experience of the "tantrums" of Miss Phyllis, followed the Colonel's advice, but when evening came and Phyllis did not appear, she got anxious. "The poor child must be starving," she said.

Then Colonel Lane went himself and knocked loudly and called without obtaining an answer.

Then he put his shoulder to the door and burst it open.

The room was empty.

Consternation and fear took possession of him. He reproached himself bitterly for his harshness.

Phyllis was so erratic, what might she not have done?

"She may be at Hawk's Nest," he said, but he did not believe it. His heart sank, and fear possessed him such as he had never felt on the battlefield. What might not a wilful, excitable girl like Phyllis do?

"I will go to Hawk's Nest, Mrs. Ransom," Colonel Lane said in a strange voice. "Don't let the servants know anything—unless it is inevitable."

In the meantime Mrs. Barrimore was much exercised in spirit. Things appeared to be all going wrong. Uncle Robert had put away the copies of his book, and refused to speak of it.

Philip had sent a letter, which she found to be only a line to say he was starting at once for London, and had no time to come in. A letter was enclosed for Phyllis, with the instruction that it should be given into her own hand. Added to that there were the underlined words:—

"I can trust you, mother, regarding this letter for Phyllis. I don't want it mentioned."

Mrs. Barrimore was arranging chrysanthemums in her flower-vases when Colonel Lane was announced. Mr. Burns had gone out to change some books at Brown and Woodley's library.

A glance was sufficient for the woman who loved, to see that the old Colonel was well-nigh heart-broken.

"My dear friend!" she exclaimed, putting out both her hands to him and searching his face with agonized eyes, "what is it?"

Two tears stole down the strong, almost severe face of the soldier, which caused Annie's own tears to gush forth.

"Tell me, dearest! tell me!" she pleaded.

"Phyllis has run away, Annie!" he told her, making a great effort to control himself.

Mrs. Barrimore thought of the letter in her pocket, but she could not betray Philip.

"I found out—accidentally—that she and Philip

were lovers," he said firmly. "I went over to the bungalow when I left you. Phyllis was there—hiding like a common housemaid—in Philip's bedroom. There was a scene. I brought Phyllis home. She went to her room and would not come out. I left her there, as I thought, to get over her temper. This morning I forced the door. She was gone. I must go over and see Philip."

"Philip has left suddenly for London," gasped Mrs. Barrimore.

"Then she is gone with him!" cried the Colonel.

"I am sure she has not," said Mrs. Barrimore hastily.

"How can you be sure, dear?" he asked her hopelessly.

"I *am* sure, and I can't tell you why," she said, trembling.

How could Philip leave a letter for Phyllis if she were with him?

At that moment Mr. Burns came in, one arm full of library books.

"I say, Lane!" he broke out in his usual blustery fashion, "I would not let Phyllis go on the East Hill alone in the evening if I were you."

"Phyllis! on the East Hill! *When* was she there?" demanded the Colonel.

"She went up by the lift quite late last night. I heard it remarked upon in the town, I am sorry to say. I thought you ought to know. Phyllis is a dear little girl, but she does too much as she likes. She is a bit of a handful, I know."

"Burns, Phyllis has run away," groaned the father.

"Run away? Nonsense!" exclaimed Uncle Robert. "Even Phyllis would draw the line at that."

"It is true, nevertheless," said the Colonel. "What

are we to do? I don't want to set all Hastings talking, yet I must make inquiries."

"I think she will come back of her own accord," said Uncle Robert. "She will soon have enough of it. What made her do it?"

Colonel Lane repeated what he had told Mrs. Barrimore, and Mrs. Barrimore told her brother of Philip's sudden departure for London.

"Phyllis may have known Philip was going, if we did not," said Mr. Burns.

"I believe they have gone together," affirmed the Colonel. "But what was she doing on the East Hill at night? It is so lonely—dangerous even."

Mrs. Barrimore turned her head away. Her face had become ashen. She recalled the incident of a woman's body being picked up on the rocks below that cliff.

Mr. Burns all at once took the reins in his own hands.

"Look here, Lane. First of all, we will send guarded wires with prepaid replies to all your friends to ask if Phyllis is there. If we find she has gone to none of them, we will wire Philip at the Savage Club. If that fails, we must at once go to the police. I am sure the girl would not go to any of our Hastings acquaintances, and if we went round inquiring of them, we should only make a scandal. Don't you worry! I'll see to it all for you. Really, I shall scold Phyllis myself when I do find her—a thing I have never done. I am surprised at Philip! He is much to blame. He knows quite well what Phyllis is, and he did very wrong to encourage her. He has no notion of marrying her, I am certain."

Colonel Lane stared vacantly in front of him. At last he said:

"It is no good wiring to Philip."

"Why?" inquired Uncle Robert.

"Because he lied to me when I was at the bungalow. He said the last time Phyllis had been there was a week ago. She was in his bedroom then—his bedroom! Think of it!"

"He may not have known it," murmured the mother.

"Of course he knew it," pronounced the Colonel.

There was an awkward, a dismal silence.

Then Uncle Robert spoke:

"Did Phyllis take any luggage?"

"I don't know. I came straight here when I found her room empty," said the Colonel.

"You ought to have examined the room. There may have been a letter. These romantic girls always leave a letter—on the pin-cushion, I believe," said Uncle Robert. "But I will send the wires, if you will give me likely addresses."

Colonel Lane gave several, but remarked bitterly: "If she meant to get away from me—her father—she would not go where I could easily find her. But send the wires."

"And you and I will go and examine her room," said Mrs. Barrimore.

The pretty bed-chamber of Phyllis was littered with odds and ends which a careless girl throws about, but there was no sign of packing. The bed had not been slept in. There was no letter to be found. Colonel Lane dropped into a chair and sat with his chin on his breast. Mrs. Barrimore laid a gentle hand on his, but he did not heed it.

Mrs. Ransom came in with some wine, but Colonel Lane waved her angrily away.

"Come home with me, dear," whispered Mrs. Barrimore.

He rose and followed her like a child.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mrs. Ransom, as she saw them depart. "Miss Phyllis ought to be downright ashamed of herself!"

The answers to the telegrams came. No one had seen Phyllis.

Then Uncle Robert went to the police.

In the meantime Davis had given a spirited account of the "row" to Pickett, who had merely laughed.

"So the old Colonel didn't know!" he remarked. "Young folks are pretty artful!"

It was from Minnie Pickett that Thomas Alvin heard of the disturbance.

Eweretta had held her peace till then. But as her uncle gave Minnie's version to her and Mrs. Le Breton, she spoke up.

"There was no love affair between them at all," she said. "Philip told me the truth. I know he told me the truth. Miss Lane treated him as a brother. They had known each other from children. She took her little troubles to him. That was all."

By the following night it was known all over Hastings that Miss Lane had run away.

It was known, too, that Philip Barrimore had gone away.

Mrs. Hannington, who had been over to Pickett's Farm, was quite tired out; she had called on everyone she knew to impart the amazing news that Mr. Barrimore and Miss Lane had gone off together!

No reply had come from Philip to the wire his uncle had sent. He had not been to the Savage Club, and he knew nothing. He was too angry to write home, and no one knew his address.

CHAPTER XXXV

PHILIP TAKES DRASTIC MEASURES

PHILIP, as a matter of fact, had been to his publishers and received a big check due to him, and then had taken a bedroom at the Adelphi Hotel. It was the first time he had stayed there, but it occurred to him that it was conveniently near to the Savage Club—which was probably why Philip did not go there and so get his wire from his Uncle Robert. Philip rarely did the thing he had planned to do.

But he had planned something for once which he was very determined to carry through, at any cost, and which would create a sensation too!

He had had a letter from Captain Arbuthnot, together with one for Phyllis, which he had left under cover with his mother for her. Captain Arbuthnot had quelled the disturbance, and had been ordered to Bombay. His return to England was uncertain. His uncle had died, so he was now in possession of a decent income. He wanted his wife. He asked Philip to arbitrate for him with Colonel Lane, fearing that if he wrote directly to the fiery old Colonel, his poor little wife would get a severe scolding, which he wanted to spare her.

Philip's idea of arbitration was to dispatch Phyllis to Bombay, and tell her father—afterwards!

He had come to London to see a friend—Captain Hurst—who was taking out his wife in a few days to

Bombay. He meant to arrange with them to take Phyllis to her husband. Then he would return to Hastings and carry off Phyllis. This was the most difficult part of his programme. He would, he knew, not be admitted at Colonel Lane's house, and he felt sure Phyllis would be forbidden to go to Hawk's Nest. He would have to bring all his wits to bear upon the problem. But he was quite determined. He was thoroughly sick of the "Phyllis complication." He had a further unpleasant experience to go through, however, one he had certainly not expected, and one which was compromising enough.

Phyllis, very untidy and tear-stained, came to the "Adelphi," and asked for him.

She had been to his publishers and got the address from them.

"I have run away, Philip," she gasped, when he met her in the entrance hall. "I found out that you had gone to London. I came and got your address from the publishers. I won't go back. What am I to do?"

"For God's sake don't begin to cry," Philip said in low, angry tones. "Come where we can talk quietly."

He led her into a room which at this hour—late afternoon—he knew he should find deserted.

"Now, Phyllis," he began, when he had closed the door, "you have finished playing the fool. I want you to understand that. You say you will not go back to Hastings. Well, I have no intention of allowing you to do so. You are going to sail with Captain and Mrs. Hurst for Bombay and join your husband. He is there."

"Oh-h-h-h!" sobbed Phyllis.

"Stop that nonsense!" said Philip sternly.

"I'm so glad to go to dear, *dear* Charlie," cried Phyllis brokenly. "Charlie never scolded me. He never looked cross at me, like you do!"

Philip looked at the small, piquant face, that had now broken into smiles, and marvelled. Who can understand a woman?

Only a few days ago she was pining for Dan Webster, and bemoaning her hasty marriage. Now, there was no mistaking her joy at the idea of going to her husband!

"Oh, won't it be a fine surprise to dad!" Phyllis continued, beginning to rattle on quite in her own natural way. "And *how* nice that Charlie has finished killing all those horrid natives! And Bombay! *Won't* it be glorious to see Bombay! I am so glad I didn't do—it!"

"Do what?" asked Philip, who did not feel interested.

"Oh! it was dreadful, Philip! I went up the East Hill, meaning to throw myself over the cliff, but I couldn't, after all. It seemed so horribly desolate and awful up there by myself. I came down again, and I walked up Salters Lane, meaning to go to your mother. *They* all thought I was in my room. I went up to the station and I saw your bag. Tutt said you were off to London—and—"

Philip interrupted her. He had, in fact, not listened to a word. He had been thinking hard.

"Phyllis, we must go at once to the 'Grand,' and I must give you over to Mrs. Hurst. She will help me about outfit. You must have clothes, and your passage must be got. There is an awful lot to get through in the time."

"But I haven't any more money—except sixpence," said Phyllis.

"Oh, don't worry," answered Philip testily. "I have got money, and someone will square up things after. By the way, Arbuthnot's uncle has died."

"How nice and considerate of him!" exclaimed Phyllis. "You see, he was pretty old, so it couldn't matter to him much, could it? and it matters a lot to Charlie and me. *Dear old Charlie!* Charlie will pay you back, Philip, and I want *heaps* of things. I must go nice, mustn't I?"

"You are anything but nice now," Philip told her with brutal frankness. "And it isn't very nice for me to have you inquiring for me here."

"I can call you 'papa' as we go out," said Phyllis. "That would make it all right—now wouldn't it?"

Philip flushed angrily. He began to hate Phyllis.

"It is all so deliciously romantic," she went on. "And Dan will have a pill to swallow, won't he?"

"He won't care a twopenny damn," answered Philip. "And now we will go, please."

Philip could not be civil. The girl's sudden high spirits irritated him unspeakably. She had worried his life out. She had placed him in a false position. He had still to face her father. What did she care about the trouble she caused everyone? She was delighted with the romance of going out to Bombay.

Philip did not envy Arbuthnot.

Phyllis tripped merrily along at his side, chattering. None of his snubs appeared to affect her.

At last he said: "You are pretty heartless, Phyllis. You care nothing that your poor father is probably nearly mad with anxiety, and I can't relieve it till you have sailed."

"Dad deserves to be a little worried, after being so cross," she declared.

"I think he has been amazingly patient," Philip

told her, and added venomously: "Don't get falling in love with anyone else on the way out! I shall tell Mrs. Hurst to keep a strict hand on you."

"How unkind you are, Philip!" (She spoke with great feeling.) "When I am going to my dear Charlie! I shall be thinking of him every minute till we land! And won't he be surprised to see me! But I suppose you will cable, won't you?"

"Yes, I shall cable. He sent you a letter. My mother has it. But you can do without that now. It was to ask you to come out and to tell you about the money."

Phyllis laughed.

"Money! oh, won't I spend some in those *lovely* bazaars I have heard of! Dan is welcome to his beautiful Aimée Le Breton now!"

What was it in those words which brought a sudden chill to Philip Barrimore's heart?

An image of the girl seemed to float before his eyes. He remembered her sweet calm, as he had told her his worries, a calm that had helped him. Yes, she had something that Eweretta had never had. She had more character, more sympathy. Eweretta had been charming, but Aimée was really more alluring.

And was Dan Webster going to marry her?

"It is odd," said Phyllis meditatively, "how I used to hate to hear Dan talk about Aimée Le Breton! I don't care now! Of course, she is in love with him too. He wore a flower one day which he said she had given him. And Dan will be a great painter, and he will be always painting *her*. It will be nice for him to have a wife for a model, won't it?"

"Oh, do stop talking!" cried Philip. "I have so much to plan and arrange."

She only laughed.

Philip was squirming under her words. Yes, no doubt Dan would marry Aimée Le Breton. Dan who could, of course, appreciate her beauty, but who was quite—yes, certainly, *quite* incapable of understanding her beautiful soul!

The more he thought of her, the more he believed that there was no man who could quite adequately appreciate her except Philip Barrimore.

“Here we are at the ‘Grand,’ ” he said, “and I wish you looked a little more presentable!”

* * * * *

After leaving Phyllis with Mrs. Hurst, Philip wired to Colonel Lane:

“Phyllis quite safe and well.

“Philip.”

But he gave no address. Phyllis must have sailed before more was told.

CHAPTER XXXVI

COLONEL LANE APOLOGIZES

It was Mrs. Barrimore who opened Philip's telegram, for Colonel Lane was quite prostrated.

"What is it?" demanded Uncle Robert excitedly, as his sister kept her eyes glued to the paper.

"Phyllis is all right," she said hysterically.

"Who sends the wire?" was the next question.

"Philip," she answered, scarcely audibly.

"Then it is true," pronounced Uncle Robert. "How are we to tell him?" (He referred to Colonel Lane, who was lying down in the drawing-room. They were in the dining-room.)

"He will know she is safe. That will lessen the other—blow," said Mrs. Barrimore.

She herself felt the blow acutely. She was forced against her will to condemn her beloved boy. Philip had acted very badly. There was no getting over it. He had caused a scandal all over Hastings. She would never have believed it of Philip—*her* Philip. She had thought that of all the world she understood him best. She had smiled when others had said that Philip had forgotten Eweretta—and now this incredible thing had happened.

"How are we to tell him, Robert?" she echoed her brother's words.

Mr. Burns was facing the open door, and at that precise moment the tall, gaunt figure of the soldier appeared framed there.

"You have news of Phyllis," he said quite calmly. Then he advanced towards the others.

Mrs. Barrimore handed him the telegram. What else could she do?

"So they are together," he said in dangerous tones.

Mrs. Barrimore gazed at the outraged father—the man whom she so tenderly loved—with eyes full of desperate pleading. The culprit was her only son—the son for whom she had sacrificed herself all her life.

Would he be merciful?

The soldier was uppermost in Colonel Lane just then—the soldier, who at duty's call untwines clinging arms from about his neck, turns a deaf ear to entreaties to stay, though uttered in the voice he loves best.

Philip should be punished, even though he was *her* son—Philip, who had befouled a name which was adorned with military honors, a name on which there had up to now been no stain.

Phyllis was now a by-word in Hastings. Her conduct was discussed at every tea-table. And this was Philip's doing—Philip, who had had the impertinence to dictate to his mother—to dictate and criticize.

No, even for Annie's sake, Philip should not be spared.

Mrs. Barrimore, watching the stern, calm face, saw that she had nothing to hope, and, mother-like, began in her heart to hate Phyllis, who had brought her boy to such a pass. Of course, it was the fault of the girl. She had led Philip on. She had always been a flirt. Surely in justice Colonel Lane ought to remember that!

But she said nothing.

Colonel Lane took his hat and went out.

He walked on the West Hill for hours.

Boys were still playing about on the grass, though their football was over.

The moon, big and round, flooded the sea with silver light.

The riding-lights of the fishing-boats looked like jewels out beyond the harbor.

The Old Town, lying below, with its lamps lit, was like a picture from some old romance. Moonlight lay tenderly on the graves round All Saints' Church on the side of the East Hill. The ruins of Hastings Castle stood out rugged and bold.

On all this the eyes of the soldier rested in turn, but he saw no beauty in any of it. Rage filled his heart.

It was after eleven o'clock when he at last made his way down the steep path that led home.

Two or three days passed miserably after this, two or three days in which he had never visited the dear fireside at Hawk's Nest; two or three days in which neither Mrs. Barrimore nor Uncle Robert had seen him, though they had both called.

On the evening of the fourth day he relented and made his way to Hawk's Nest.

It was after dinner.

A fierce wind was blowing, the sea roared on the shingle.

Entering the familiar dining-room, where Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Burns still lingered, a sense of relief came over the Colonel. It lasted but for a moment, for he was followed into the room—by Philip.

Philip looked haggard and worn. The mother flew to him with outstretched arms.

"Philip! oh, Philip!" she cried.

Colonel Lane looked coldly on. He waited till Philip had freed himself from the clinging arms, then he said: "Annie, leave us, I beg of you!"

Mrs. Barrimore, with her chin on her breast and her eyes streaming with tears, left the room obediently.

Colonel Lane closed the door he had held open for her to pass out; then he folded his arms and advanced towards Philip.

Uncle Robert's ruddy face had paled.

"Where is my daughter, you scoundrel?" demanded the Colonel.

This was too much for Philip. He had been harassed out of his life these last days. He had done what he honestly believed to be the best for a girl for whom he now felt something akin to contempt—and her father stood there calling him a scoundrel. He was not disposed to at once relieve the old soldier's tension.

"I have had quite enough of her!" he answered curtly.

"What!" roared the soldier. "Do you mean to tell me that you have left that poor deluded girl, after taking her away! Tell me where she is? Tell me, I say, you contemptible cur!"

Philip was white with passion. "I wish I had never seen your daughter," he said with feeling, "and I pity the man who has got her."

Colonel Lane grasped the young man's shoulder fiercely, while he hissed: "Explain that!"

Philip shook the hand off, and savagely projecting his chin, said:

"I have a good deal to explain, and if you will sit down quietly and listen, then after you have heard, I think you will see the necessity of an apology."

Colonel Lane sat down rigidly, and Philip slowly

and wearily took the chair that Uncle Robert pushed towards him.

"Phyllis is on her way to Bombay to join her husband," he said slowly.

A hissing breath came from the Colonel's throat. He closed his mouth with a snap. His eyes stared. Philip went on:

"Phyllis was married to Captain Arbuthnot before he went out to India. They were married at St. Clement's Church. You can see it for yourself in the register. She told me of it almost at once, after obtaining my promise to keep the communication secret. She came to me to get letters from her husband, which were sent under cover to me, and to talk of her various difficulties.

"Well, after that rather unpleasant half-hour at the bungalow, I thought the best thing was to get Phyllis off to her husband, who has come into money. She has gone with Captain and Mrs. Hurst—whom you know by name at least. Now what have you to say?"

The room was going round with Colonel Lane. A great buzzing was in his ears. He clutched at his collar.

Uncle Robert came and loosened it and gave him some brandy.

Philip, apathetic and played-out, toyed with a wine-glass as if unconscious of what was going on.

At length Colonel Lane gave a long sigh and recovered himself, and holding on to the table, rose. "Philip," he said, "I apologize." Then a spasm caught his throat.

Philip seemed to rouse out of a kind of stupor. He looked at the old soldier, and a sudden pity seized him. He held out his hand, which the Colonel grasped.

"I am to blame, sir, a good deal to blame, but I am not so bad as you thought me. I was afraid Phyllis was about to wreck her life. I won't go into particulars about that. To send her to her husband seemed the only thing to do."

"I know how difficult she is to deal with," acknowledged the Colonel, "and as she is married, it is best she should be with her husband as quickly as possible. But I should have liked the manner of her going to have been different. I should have liked to say good-bye!"

Philip, remembering how gaily Phyllis had gone off, pitied the father the more.

"Do you know it is all over Hastings that you have eloped with her?" said Uncle Robert.

"I daresay it is," answered Philip, "but all that can soon be put right. She didn't go with me at all, but came afterwards and found me out. I had gone to make arrangements with the Hursts. I did not trust Phyllis. I did not know what folly she might commit."

"All's well that ends well!" said Uncle Robert. "Let us fetch Annie!"

Mrs. Barrimore came in with tear-stained face, her tender mouth smiling, for Uncle Robert had whispered that all was right.

Then all had to be told over again. Mrs. Barrimore was still somewhat puzzled, remembering her conversation with Phyllis. She had then got the impression that Phyllis was the victim of a hopeless love. Phyllis was unexplainable—an impossible girl!

"You have the letter, mother?" asked Philip.

Mrs. Barrimore produced it.

"Give it to the Colonel," Philip said. "It is from Arbuthnot, and there is a line from me."

Colonel Lane opened the letter in which lay confirmation of the amazing story he had just heard.

"Mother, I am so tired," said Philip.

"And starving, my own boy!" answered Mrs. Barimore. "You must have a meal instantly."

The meal was ordered, and the mother sat between her dear friend and her son, looking from one to the other with shining eyes.

"I feel like 'Mr. Wegg,'" remarked Uncle Robert, "and inclined to drop into poetry."

But no one listened.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE HAND OF FATE

WHEN Philip Barrimore had accepted Colonel Lane's apology and his hand, it had been an act of weariness and pity rather than an accepting of new relations. He was so jaded by anger and resentment, to say nothing of getting Phyllis off, that peace at any price seemed the only thing that mattered for the moment.

Uncle Robert's jubilation had been a little premature.

Mrs. Barrimore was the first to make the discovery.

Philip, late though it was, announced his intention of going back to Gissing on foot. Philip hated walking, and he was dog-tired, so the mother knew that the strife was not ended.

She did not oppose him. When did she ever oppose him?

What Philip wanted to do, that he did. It had always been so.

"Davis will come for my bag," he said as he left, which showed his mother that he would not be coming in on the morrow.

She went with him to the door alone, hoping for some comforting word. She laid a gentle, timid hand on his arm and looked up at him.

"Oh, don't, mother!" he ejaculated. "Women never know when a man wants to be left alone!"

The young man caught the last tram to Ore, which

helped him a little on his way. Then he strode along in the darkness, communing with himself.

No one had ever been such a victim as he! Everyone misjudged him! He could not even be allowed to write his books in peace!

The thought of his book brought new disagreeable reflections. Aimée Le Breton had not liked it. Why the deuce should he care what Aimée Le Breton thought? Yet—yes, certainly, her opinion had put him out of favor with his work. Women were the devil's own mischief.

And while he thought this, he unconsciously fought with an impulse which he felt to be mastering him, to go to Aimée Le Breton, and drink big draughts of the peace she distilled.

How she had calmed him that afternoon when he had gone to the White House, and told her of his "row" with the Colonel. It had not been her words. They had been few enough. It was *herself*. There was a calming atmosphere about her. He had seen and noted, more particularly afterwards, that her attitude towards him had changed for the better.

As he walked, his impulse to tell her all the rest of the story about Phyllis, took definite shape. He wanted her good opinion. He wished it was not so damnably late, he would go in and see her. If he could see her he would have refreshing sleep.

But he would cross the field, tired and worn out as he was, and look at the White House before entering the bungalow.

Davis was not expecting him, and had taken "french leave," locked up the bungalow, and gone to Hastings, where friends persuaded him to stay the night.

This Philip was to find out later.

Reaching the gate of the bungalow, the young man paused to light a cigarette. "Pickett has been burning rubbish," he said to himself, as he sniffed the odor of burning.

Leaving the road by a stile for the field, Philip fixed his eyes on the upstairs windows of the White House. In two of them lights were burning. Behind one of the two windows, probably, was the calm maiden who had been so strangely filling his thoughts. He vaguely wished he knew which.

Coming nearer, he saw the light of a lantern moving towards the little wood. Alvin was evidently not gone to bed.

What had he got in the little wood which he guarded so jealously and visited alone at night?

Philip, coming up to the garden gate, leaned upon it for a few moments. The air here was pungent with chrysanthemums and dead leaves. It was curious that the scent of Pickett's rubbish fires was not evident here, yet the farm was nearer to the White House than to the bungalow.

With a big sigh of weariness Philip turned to go home, and noted that now a light was lying across his front garden.

Evidently Davis had heard his master's footsteps and had lit up.

Ah, well! there would be the comfort of his own fireside awaiting him—a glass of grog (he could do with it hot, for the night was cold), and a pipe.

He entered his back garden by the little gate that led into the field, and was surprised to see no light in the kitchen window. Soda, too, was kicking about in the stable. Pickett's rubbish fires smelt more strongly than ever.

Trying the back door, Philip found it locked, and

after vain hammering, he went round to the front, which was lit—yes, very well lit!

Taking out his latchkey, he opened the door, and was met by a cloud of suffocating smoke.

Thoroughly alive now to the situation, he made his way to his sitting-room. He knew quite well what he should find.

The smell of burning which he had noticed was not from Pickett's rubbish fires, but from his own bungalow.

Through the thick smoke he saw that one of the window-curtains was blazing. All his papers which he had left scattered on table and chairs under the window were a charred heap. The writing-table was on fire, also the wicker chair near it, where Phyllis had thrown her hat on that memorable afternoon. He ran to the kitchen, shouting for Davis, and, of course, getting no reply. One or two cans of water from the well stood near the scullery sink. He took these and dashed them upon the burning furniture.

Then the hopelessness of the situation faced him. The place would burn down unless he could get help, for the drawing of water from the well was a long process.

He dashed out of the house and across the field towards the White House, and going to the side of the little wood shouted for Alvin.

Alvin quickly appeared, still carrying his lantern and calling: "Quit yelling! I'm coming!" He ran through the garden to Philip, whose voice he had at once recognized.

"Anything wrong?" he inquired.

"For God's sake come and help me, my place is on fire!" cried Philip hoarsely. "That fool, Davis, has left the place, and it is on fire!"

"I've tackled worse fires, I'm thinking," said the Colonial, putting on a speed which seemed almost miraculous for a man of his bulk.

The fire had got well ahead in these few minutes, and the smoke was so suffocating that it seemed almost impossible to do anything. But the Colonial set to work. He tore up the Turkey carpet and laid it over the burning mass—of what he did not know, and called to Philip to shut the front door.

But Philip did not answer. So jaded had he been, that the smoke overcame him, and he lay unconscious on his back, where he had fallen, just outside the dining-room door.

When he came to himself, Alvin was supporting him, and giving him something from a teacup. The fire was extinguished, and the only light was that of the lantern.

"It's all right," said Alvin cheerfully—"a deuce of a mess, that's all. When you are through with this whisky, you will come back with me. We can make you comfortable, and I will send Pierre to take charge of this place."

Philip could only gasp his thanks.

Almost in a dream, he once more crossed the field to the White House, but coming up to the garden gate he was roused into wakefulness. There were lights in the rooms downstairs, and there were voices. Aimée's was one, he distinguished it, and it was the sound of it that brought him to the full possession of his senses.

The women had heard Philip's call. They had heard his explanation to Alvin. They had dressed and come down to prepare for the guest that their instinct told them would come.

A wood fire was crackling and sending up myriads

of gay sparks in the dining-room. Lamps had been relighted, and Mattie (without cap and apron) was laying a cold repast.

Mrs. Le Breton was upstairs with Faith preparing a bedroom.

Alvin, having drawn up an easy chair for Philip near the fire, went away to remove the effects of his work with soap and water.

Philip was left alone with Eweretta.

To his amazement she did not ply him with questions. All the women he knew would have done this. She quietly (how quietly!) moved here and there, performing little womanly tasks for the general comfort. One of the lamps (hastily lighted) smoked a little. She put it right. She rearranged things on the table that the sleepy Mattie had laid awry. She got out decanters from the sideboard.

Philip silently watched her, and was again conscious of the peace her mere presence brought him. She was wearing a crimson wrapper, and her black hair, which had been braided in a long thick plait for the night, hung far below her waist.

At last he spoke. He spoke as a man speaks who dreams.

"I never saw Eweretta's hair down," he said. "She, too, had beautiful black hair like you. I think it must have been very long."

The girl kept her back towards him as she fingered something on the sideboard.

"Yes, it was very long," she answered.

"Lots of things in you remind me of her, besides your looks," went on Philip. "Your voice is hers, and you have her trick of passing your hand across your forehead. But you are very different from her, nevertheless. She was always laughing. Do you

ever laugh, Miss Le Breton? I don't think I have once heard you laugh. But you smile more than she did, and differently."

"I am as you say, very different from Eweretta—from Eweretta, as you knew her," she answered. "But I think we will not talk of her just now."

"Miss Le Breton," he broke out, "do you know my book—the book you did not like—is destroyed, and that I don't think I am sorry?"

"Yet you said you put your heart into it," she reminded him.

"I don't think I knew," he answered vaguely. "Not then. I have worked a lot on that book since I read some chapters to you, and I think I must have seen it with your eyes. I got not to like it."

Eweretta's heart was beating so wildly that she foolishly feared he might hear it. It was an absurd idea, but she thought it.

Philip's voice, as he talked, was the old Philip's, and not the voice which was hard and critical which she had noted when first she met him in her new character.

"It is very sad, tragic even, to have so much work destroyed," she said, when she could command her voice.

She had sat down now, opposite to him, but at a distance from the fire.

He laughed softly.

"Yet I said I was not sorry," he told her.

How exquisitely graceful she was! Just the same lines and curves which he had found so alluring in Eweretta.

"I have become self-centred and hard since—since Eweretta died," he said. "If she had lived, I should not be the disagreeable brute I am. I put myself in

that book, and frankly, Miss Le Breton, I did not find the picture pleasing on revision. You made me see it as it was."

"What did I say?" she asked him.

"Is speech a necessity between some people?" he asked her.

"Here I am!" exclaimed Alvin, coming in red and shiny from much soap and water. "It is like old days in the prairie to get an unexpected visitor. Now we will fall to and eat a good supper. It will be my second, but I figure that I have earned it."

"I can never thank you sufficiently for all your kindness and hospitality," said Philip.

"There is nothing to thank me for," pronounced Alvin.

"I feel quite ashamed," said Philip. "I have got you all out of your beds, and given no end of trouble."

"Come and have supper," was the rejoinder.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IN THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR

It was on the tenth of November that Philip Barri-more received a letter from Dan Webster. That was about a fortnight after the fire at the bungalow, and Philip, who had refused to go home to Hawk's Nest while the damage to his place was being repaired, had been staying in Brighton. He was still there, and the letter had been forwarded by the repentant and forgiven Davis (who owned that he lit a pipe, throwing down the match, before leaving the bungalow).

Dan offered his sympathy, especially regarding the loss of the manuscript. He had only just heard about the fire from Mr. Burns.

"It is hard luck!" he wrote. "If my 'Madonna' had been so destroyed, I should have felt just suicidal. My 'Madonna'! ah! it is to bring my good fortune! Sir Edwin Buckland has seen it, and declares it will not only be hung in the Academy, but will cause a sensation. *He* has a big voice in the hanging committee, as you know, so I am confident—I think justly. But it is not fair to flaunt my happiness in your face, when you must be so down in the dumps. I wish I could say something to really cheer you, old man! The only thing I can think of is that you are getting a rattling good advertisement out of the business. I have seen any number of

sympathetic 'pars.' How strange that you never discovered the origin of the fire. I expect Davis dropped a lighted match on the rug and it smouldered.

"I have just had a letter from Mr. Alvin, and, oddly enough, he makes no reference to the fire, though Mr. Burns tells me Alvin extinguished it.

"Poor Mr. Burns! he is getting some awful reviews of 'Wings and Winds.' I saw one that said the volume had certainly a good deal of 'wind' about it, but it was difficult to discover the evidence of any wings, for the verses never mounted, but contented themselves with a snail-like crawl. Rather too bad, I think. I am no judge of poetry myself, but I liked some of those Mr. Burns showed to me. They appealed by their sheer simplicity. It will be a cruel disappointment to the poor fellow!

"By the way, I have an invitation to spend a weekend at the White House, so hope to see something of you, for you may be quite sure I shall accept so enticing an invitation.

"Shall I make a confession? I think I will. Very likely I shall wish I had not made such a fool of myself when this letter is posted—but here goes!

"I am in love with Miss Le Breton. The fact itself is natural enough. Who could be near her as I have been, so intimately, and not worship her? So beautiful! so altogether alluring! I think she likes me a little, too. If she could love me, I would not change with any man upon this earth! but—(oh, there is a big 'but')—how can such an angel care for a beggar like me? It is a presumption even to think of it! Yet (as Mr. Burns would quote) 'a cat may look at a king!' so I may at least look on my divinity, worshipping at a distance, happy if she but give me one kindly glance.

"I can see your lip curl in sarcasm as you read; or, if perchance you be in a milder mood, you smile indulgently instead.

"I never was more astonished in my life than when I heard the amazing story about Miss Lane—Mrs. Arbuthnot, I should say. I really thought you and she were secretly engaged. This should be a lesson to me not to jump to conclusions!

"No wonder the poor little thing was not looking well! She must have been fretting her heart out for her husband. Mrs. Barrimore was quite worried about her when I was at Hawk's Nest. But you rather took the law into your own hands, didn't you? Didn't you have a bad quarter of an hour with the old Colonel?"

Philip read the remaining few lines of the letter, placed it in his pocket, and looked out of the window of his sitting-room, on the ground floor of a house half-way up Cannon Place.

Gloom faced him. It was that dreary time just before the street lamps are lighted.

He would go out on the sea front and think. Think about what? He knew too well.

Of course, Miss Le Breton would learn to love sunny Dan, even if she did not do so already. Alvin evidently favored the idea, or why did he ask Dan to spend a week-end at the White House?

As Philip strode down Cannon Place, his cap over his eyes, he felt a sense of loneliness that was almost torture. He realized with a brutal frankness which came upon him at times when face to face with himself, that he was not lovable; that, indeed, there was something actually repellent about him at times.

Just now he took a savage pleasure in dissecting

himself. He looked for faults as carefully as a medical student searches for nerves in a fat "subject."

He was fault-finding. He wounded people recklessly. He was ungrateful and overbearing and selfish and vain—but once, a pure young girl had loved him, loved him with all the strength of a first passion. To her innocent inexperience he had been a hero, a demi-god. She lay in her grave away in Qu'Appelle. Canada was frozen up now, and the great snows were burying Eweretta deeper and deeper still. Was she colder or more lonely in her prairie grave than he felt here in gay Brighton? Scarcely.

He came to the corner of Cannon Place and stood looking into the window of the big jeweller's shop which is there. It was brilliantly lit now, and exquisite jewels shone on their satin and velvet beds.

It occurred to Philip for the first time to wonder what had become of the jewelry he remembered John Alvin to have bought for Eweretta in Bond Street. They had been pretty trinkets and had cost a good deal of money. John Alvin had rather vulgarly boasted of the fact.

Perhaps these trinkets had passed to Thomas Alvin with the rest on Eweretta's death, and he might have turned them back into money.

Certainly Miss Le Breton did not seem to possess any jewelry. She never wore any, at all events.

The ring (it was a half-hoop of pearls) which he—Philip—had given to Eweretta, had been sent back to him by Thomas Alvin.

The young man had it still. It was a tiny ring, too small for a woman, he had thought, but it had slipped easily over the third finger of Eweretta's hand, when he had placed it there in token of their betrothal.

Miss Le Breton's hands were as small and delicate as her half-sister's.

Philip began to think (he laughed at himself grimly for the thought) that he should like to see Miss Le Breton wearing Eweretta's ring.

Philip crossed the road, dodging the rushing motor-cars, and walked along the parade in the direction of Hove.

There was a sea mist coming up, and the air felt raw, but at the point opposite the Norfolk Hotel, "Blind Harry" was singing one of his ballads, playing a soft accompaniment upon his accordeon.

"Blind Harry's" beautiful voice, familiar to every Brightonian, was new to Philip. He had never heard the man sing before.

The music moved him strangely, and gave him an increased sense of loneliness. Eweretta used to sing such ballads. She had a low, sweet voice of a marvellous clearness and purity—not unusual in Canadian singers. She sang without apparent effort, as "Blind Harry" was singing now.

Philip placed a coin in the blind man's little box, and with a choking sensation turned back. It was high tide, and the waves broke sullenly upon the shingle.

"I can't stand this any longer," Philip told himself. "I must go back to Hastings. I, who have so sought solitude, feel now that it will drive me mad! I could even put up with Uncle Robert's quotations to-night, rather than be alone."

Lights gleamed from the "Metropole" through the mist.

"I will go there and get tea," decided Philip. "It is bright in there, at any rate." And he made his way into the lounge. There he saw to his joy a man

he knew. It was Dan Webster's friend, Stanley Browne.

"Hallo! Barrimore!" cried Browne. "Who would have thought of seeing you! Where are you staying?"

"In Cannon Place," answered Philip, grasping Browne's hand vigorously. "Hotels are too noisy for me, so I am in rooms. I just looked in for tea here."

"You drink tea, do you! you hardened reprobate! Well, you must forgive me if I do not join you. Tea plays the deuce with me. I am glad you came in, though! What are you doing this evening? We might go somewhere together if you have no engagement."

"I have no engagement," said Philip, "and shall be delighted to go anywhere you like—to something frivolous by preference. They have tragedies on at both theatres, I notice."

"The Hippodrome, then?" suggested Browne.

"Yes, by all means!" agreed Philip. "There is always something amusing on there."

Browne ordered tea for his friend, and the two men found a table near the welcome blaze of the fire and seated themselves.

"Seen Dan lately?" asked Browne.

"Not very lately," answered Philip; "but I had a letter from him to-day."

"Anything in it about the beautiful 'Madonna?'"

"A good deal."

"Ah! I thought so. It seems to me that Dan has lost his head over that young woman. Who is she?"

Philip looked up from the tea-cup he had started to fill, the dainty silver pot poised in his hand.

"That is it!—Who *is* she?" he said with a queer smile. "I can tell you who she is said to be."

Browne eyed his friend a trifle anxiously, and cast a hasty glance round to see if any of the other occupants of tea-tables were noticing.

Philip lowered his voice when he next spoke.

"I stayed for a night at the White House recently—the White House is near my bungalow, and where Dan's 'Madonna' lives with her mother and her uncle. I had a queer experience there, queer enough to make a man believe in the supernatural—or (and this is the only alternative) that his reason is losing balance."

Browne was now all eager attention. He was tremendously interested in psychical matters.

"You know, Browne, that I was engaged to marry a lovely Canadian girl?"

Browne nodded sympathetically.

"Dan's 'Madonna' is her half-sister. They were as alike as twins externally, but my old love, Eweretta, was intellectual, while her half-sister was said to be weak-minded. I begin to think that the weak-mindedness was an invention to excite the father's pity. There is no sign of weak-mindedness about Aimée Le Breton—that is the 'Madonna's' name. Well, of course, the amazing likeness to her sister will in your opinion explain what I am going to say to you. To me it is not an explanation. It was just when I was saying good-bye to Miss Le Breton that I swear to you *I saw her dead sister's soul looking out of her eyes*. I shall never forget the experience as long as I live."

"This is enormously interesting!" exclaimed Browne, the psychic enthusiast. "You say that Miss Le Breton was supposed to be weak-minded. The

bodies of such are very easily entered by spirits. It is more than possible that you did see the spirit of your lost love."

"It is more than possible that my brain was not normal," Philip observed. "But I have never been able to shake the feeling off. I was so moved at the time that I very nearly made a fool of myself. I had the greatest difficulty in preventing myself from catching the girl to my heart."

"There would have been ructions with Dan if you had!" Browne told him.

"*She* would not have forgiven me," Philip went on, unheeding the interruption. "She is very different from Eweretta in some ways, but at that one moment I say I saw Eweretta's soul looking out of *her* eyes."

"Forgive me, now, for jumping in on your *most* inter-es-ting conversation," came in a voice which made both men start.

The owner of the voice was a woman of about forty, whose ample figure was adorned by an undoubted Paris gown.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A SUPERNATURAL HAPPENING

"I COULD not help listening," the woman half apologized with a good-humored smile. "You see, I am so 'dead nuts' on things psychic, and I can tell you gentlemen a *re*-markable story, which may interest you, and which my husband, who is just now *en*-joying a cocktail, can vouch for. That gentleman" (indicating Philip with a fat, white hand sparkling with jewels), "thinks he saw his dead sweetheart looking out of another woman's eyes. Now, that was a very tall story, or would be to some people's thinking, because the second lady must be supposed to have a spirit of her own to accommodate in her body already. But I can very well believe it. *With* your permission, I will bring my cup to your table. Fortunately, everyone has left us now, and we can be just comfortable."

The two men made a place for the extraordinary woman, who sat down at once in the chair Philip offered her.

At first both Philip and Browne had been disposed to take offence, but the woman's daring won the day.

"Now, in Chicago, where we hail from, there is a family as proud as Lucifer because the woman's grandmother was an English aristocrat. This grandmother used to do most wonderful tapestry; she spent all her time that way. When she was dying,

she was all the time worrying about a piece she had not finished, and her last words were, 'I *will* finish it!'"

She waited for effect.

"Well, now, I'll go on to the *con*-clusion. The granddaughter of this strong-willed old aristocrat was a very stupid girl, and all their dollars could make nothing of her, but she was to take a top seat all the same. That girl, who could not sew on a button, took and finished the fine tapestry her grandmother had begun, and the work was perfect! All the family, even the cook and the boot-boy, came to have a look at her working. They peeped through a nick in the door. And when the work was done, the girl said she had not done it, and had never seen it; and if she *had* done it, it must have been in her sleep! and from the day the tapestry was finished she never touched a needle! What do you gentlemen think of that? Of course, the *grandmother* had used the girl's fingers, and finished the work, as she had vowed to do when she was dying."

The narrator of this story was a little disappointed in its reception, for both Philip and Browne seemed to find it funny merely. They laughed a good deal.

"That was a case of the ruling passion strong *after* death, wasn't it?" asked Philip.

"There is no such thing as death," affirmed the lady with some warmth.

"There is something pretty disagreeable called by that name, nevertheless," commented Browne.

"I guess that when I am what they call dead, I shall know a heap more than those who are putting wreaths on me," she declared. "But there is my husband, and we are going out, so I wish you both *good-bye*."

"What a curious specimen!" said Philip, as the silk skirts disappeared through the door. "You had better look out or she will hang on to you, as you are staying here."

"She would, I am sure," laughed Browne; "but I go back to London to-morrow morning."

"I go back to Hastings to-morrow, too," answered Philip.

"Well, we will enjoy to-night together, at any rate," Browne concluded.

It had been a good thing for Philip that he had met Browne that night. Depression had been playing up with him more than he knew.

He was at a loss to understand why he had felt so wretchedly blue since Phyllis had gone. It was certainly not the loss of that erratic young woman that had caused it. It was certainly not the loss of the manuscript, for he had come to dislike the book heartily since Miss Le Breton had not liked it. The strained relations at Hawk's Nest were no new thing.

Philip was at a loose end, and his one desire was to open his heart to Dan's "Madonna."

But would it be fair to Dan?

After all, there was nothing definite between Dan and his "Madonna"—as yet. There could be no harm in going to the White House and getting a little comfort for himself.

He had quite forgotten his idea of making a marriage which should help his career! The man had done this in his story. He now heartily despised that man, who was so unpleasantly like himself. Possibly the self-knowledge that had mysteriously come to him had something to do with his depression.

One thing he decided during the train journey

home: He would make himself agreeable when he got there. If he did not do that, he could not face Miss Le Breton. This was curious, as she could know nothing about it. But somehow he felt that he must improve himself, if he were to come into that girl's presence—that girl! Dan's "Madonna!"—and Dan was invited to stay there. Dan was going.

Happy Dan!

Philip began to pity himself as that most unhappy of beings—the man who must stand aside and look upon another man's joy. Philip liked Dan—genuinely liked him. Dan had always been a reliable friend. He had put up with moroseness and ill-humor. He had shown ill-deserved affection towards a man few liked, and many disliked. Good old Dan! but Philip envied him all the same.

Philip was destined to see more of Aimée Le Breton than he had hoped for. Mrs. Barrimore had said to Uncle Robert after the kindness Alvin and Mrs. Le Breton had shown to her boy, "I ought to call on them, Robert," and he had thoroughly agreed.

So, while Philip had been at Brighton, Mrs. Barrimore and Mr. Burns had driven over to Gissing and made a formal call at the White House, and had come back nearly as much in love with Aimée Le Breton as Dan was.

"If Eweretta were like Miss Le Breton—as we hear she was," Mrs. Barrimore had said to her brother on the way home, "I no longer wonder that Philip was so much in love. She is adorable."

In which sentiment Ucle Robert had agreed. He even went so far as to say she had inspired a lyric which he would write down when he got home.

Neither Mrs. Barrimore nor Uncle Robert had seen Eweretta during that visit to London with her father

when Philip had fallen in love and become engaged (of course, without consulting them!).

Now, having seen what Eweretta had been like, both the mother and the uncle entirely exonerated Philip for the sudden engagement for which at the time they had mildly blamed him.

"I should have done it myself at Philip's age," Uncle Robert had confessed.

He furthermore had expressed the opinion that it was quite impossible that Miss Le Breton's mind had ever been clouded. She was not even neurotic. There had been some big mistake or some big deception, Mrs. Barrimore had arrived at precisely the same opinion.

Things had developed so far during Philip's stay in Brighton that when he arrived at Hawk's Nest he found the White House folk lunching there.

He did not enter the dining-room until he had made an unusually careful toilet. This was a new departure for Philip, who had been rather careless of his personal appearance during the last months.

He tried on three ties from his bag before he was satisfied with one. He arranged his hair carefully, noting the while that it wanted cutting, and regretting that he had not seen to it. He shaved, although he had already shaved that day, and scrutinized his features in the glass, wondering if he looked his best clean-shaven. He decided that he did. His mouth was good, and he needed not to hide it by a moustache. His chin was strong. Yes, it was by no means a bad-looking face that he saw reflected in the glass.

He was glad that Colonel Lane was not of the party. He had ascertained that fact from the parlor-maid. She had told him that Colonel Lane

had gone back to Dulwich, as his friend Colonel Henderson had had a relapse.

When quite satisfied with his appearance, Philip went down to the dining-room, where the tender mother was of course the first to welcome her boy. Her loving arms were about him the moment he entered the room. Her heart harbored no resentment for his cold and even cruel behavior when he had parted with her. He did not forget, however, and a flush of genuine shame came to his face as he remembered his words to her, "Women never know when a man wants to be left alone."

He had now had quite enough of being left alone. Never for months had he greeted his mother so affectionately, and to his credit be it recorded, that it was not done because the eyes of the woman with whom he wanted to "stand well," were upon him.

When the mother, radiant, and with one of those lovely blushes on her cheek, had gone back to her seat; when Mrs. Le Breton, Mr. Alvin and "Aimée" had been duly greeted, and Uncle Robert had made Philip's hand tingle by a hearty grip, Philip took his place with the rest.

"It is good to be home," he said.

"'East or West, home's best,'" quoted Uncle Robert.

"'And what is Home without a Mother?'" said Philip, with an affectionate glance in Mrs. Barri-more's direction.

"Who is quoting now?" cried Uncle Robert, beaming. "Do you know, Mrs. Le Breton," he went on, "my quotations drove that young man from home! He couldn't stand them. They got on his nerves."

"I think *I* got on everyone's nerves," said Philip. "I begin to see that I am an intolerant beast."

Uncle Robert stared. What had come over Philip? The Brighton air seemed to have performed miracles.

Eweretta dropped her table-napkin and stooped to pick it up, but it was not the stooping that flushed her pale cheek.

She did not once look at Philip till the meal was ended.

But Philip looked at her more than once.

She was wearing a black felt hat, wide in the brim, on which was a wonderful white ostrich feather. Philip decided that black and white was by far the most becoming combination. Eweretta, he remembered, had dressed less quietly, though in perfect good taste.

The guests left soon after luncheon, and Alvin offered to give Philip a "lift" home. But Philip, thanking him, said he wanted to stay a day or two with his mother.

It was then that Philip once more saw Eweretta looking out of the eyes of Miss Le Breton.

Again the sudden impulse to take the girl to his heart had to be suppressed. The impulse this time was so strong that Philip wondered afterwards that he had been able to resist it, even though others were by.

CHAPTER XL

MOTHER AND SON

PHILIP stayed for a whole week at Hawk's Nest. Davis had brought Soda over, and Philip had ridden over once or twice to look at the bungalow.

It had been an ideal week to Mrs. Barrimore, for Philip had shown her so much affection. Philip had always had a deep love for his mother, even when he had wounded her, but in this week he had not hurt her once, nor had he hurt Uncle Robert. Regarding this latter he had "influenced" a review of "Wings and Winds," which had given the author the greatest pleasure. Philip had something to bear on this count, for Uncle Robert flaunted the review in his face, declaring that here was a reviewer—on a good paper, too!—who did not take Philip's view of the verses.

But Philip took all this well. He must behave so as to gain Miss Le Breton's good opinion. She would know nothing of all this, yet he felt that she would read him when next they met, with those searching eyes of hers. She would know he was trying to improve himself.

Dan had called in to see them, full of high spirits, when he was on his way to the White House, and Philip had felt a great dejection come over him. Dan must be pretty sure of his ground, or he would not be in such high spirits.

Another thing had happened during this week. Colonel Henderson had passed away.

Uncle Robert, who was as full of impulse as his nephew, in his own way, had insisted on Mrs. Henderson and the two boys, Will and Eric, coming to Hawk's Nest.

"The boys shall go to Brighton College," he said, "and then to Sandhurst. There is no one to interfere, for I got Lane to see that Henderson made a will leaving me guardian—that is, joint-guardian with him—which means that I shall have a free hand."

Philip at this time had ample opportunity of studying his uncle's character afresh, and he decided that the old fellow on whom he had often looked with something very nearly approaching contempt was one of the noblest men he had ever known. The joy, which brimmed over, in finding an outlet for his unselfish kindness was a thing to remember.

"There is the room that Dan used to paint in, Annie!" spluttered Uncle Robert, his words tumbling over each other in his excitement. "The boys could have that for a play-room. I can get some tools, and some wood, and a lathe—we should not hear the lathe much up there. The big cupboard with drawers underneath would be very handy for the boys. Mrs. Henderson can have the other big attic to stow away her furniture if she wishes to keep it. It is a ramshackle lot, Lane says, but still, she may like to keep it. Women get attached to these things. Mrs. Henderson should have a room for herself with a south aspect. What a good thing Hawk's Nest is so roomy!"

Philip saw all these preparations going on, and saw that his mother went hand and glove with his uncle in the matter. He marvelled that she, with her dainty ways, should be so willing to suffer such an invasion of her home. Will and Eric the Colonel had

called "destroying angels," and Mrs. Henderson, by his accounts, was a broken-hearted creature, who would be a very wet blanket.

true brother and sister. Both were always forgetting self.

All at once (it had been when Philip had noticed his mother trying to smooth out the lovely natural wave of her hair) Philip began to actually realize that he—yes, he, in his domineering arrogance, had closed the door of happiness to his beautiful mother. Her youthful aspect struck her son more forcibly than ever in the plain gown she had affected, he knew, just to meet his wishes. Her charming figure was emphasized by the plain, well-fitting bodice.

Philip felt guilty as he watched his mother smoothing her hair. It seemed to him he was always feeling guilty lately.

"Mother," he said abruptly, as he fingered the pretty silver objects on her toilet table. (He had strolled into her room and seated himself on a chintz-covered chair while she got ready to go out with him.) "Mother, don't brush that wave out. I like it. It is so pretty."

"You *dear!*" she exclaimed, laughing and blushing; "but you know you think it almost a crime for the mother of a grown-up son to look pretty!"

"I think," affirmed Philip humbly, "that I have been a dictatorial ass. I must have made you very unhappy often, mother. Can you forgive me?"

She turned shining eyes upon him, eyes that had never looked but in love upon him from the time when he had first lain upon her breast. She had been almost a child herself, then.

"You are my own boy," she said. "There can never be any question of forgiving between us."

She laughed a little, though tears stood in her eyes. "I am afraid I do look absurdly young, Philip, and I feel young, which is more. I don't think I really *felt* so young when I was Annie Burns."

Philip passed an arm about her as he kissed her cheek.

"It would be hard to lose you, mother," he told her.

"Silly boy! Do I look like dying?" she asked.

"I did not mean that," he rejoined. Then he ceased abruptly.

She went to the big wardrobe that occupied almost the entire side of her room. She was going to choose a hat to put on.

"Put on a pretty one," said Philip. "And, mother, why don't you have a black one with a big white ostrich feather? I think that looks A 1."

She glanced at him sharply. She recalled at once with a pang the wearer of the hat her son was thinking of. She knew of Dan's infatuation for Miss Le Breton.

Surely—surely her beloved boy was not going to suffer a second martyrdom! That would be too cruel. Aimée Le Breton was not only a very beautiful and charming woman, but she was like Eweretta. It was fearfully possible that Philip should fall in love with her, and that he should discover that she loved Dan Webster. Alvin, too, appeared to be encouraging Dan.

Oh, it would be too sad! too horribly cruel!

She stood with the hat she had chosen to wear in her hand, and seemed to hesitate.

"You don't answer, mother," persisted Philip. "Did you not like Miss Le Breton's hat? I found it charming."

"Yes, dear, I did admire it very much," she answered, as she came to the toilet table in quest of hatpins.

"And Miss Le Breton, do you admire her?" demanded Philip.

"Exceedingly," answered the mother. "I think," she added, inflicting a wound to save a greater, "I think we shall hear of an engagement between her and Dan soon. Dan is, of course, in love with her, and she seems fond of him."

Philip had already known and fully realized this, but somehow his mother's words stung him to the quick.

Why? he asked himself. What difference could it make to him, since he was altogether out of the running?

Miss Le Breton had been kind to him, but if there were no Dan, he felt she would not be one inch nearer to him—Philip. Still, he was free to admire—even to worship at the shrine of Dan's Madonna at a discreet distance. Even Dan could not object to that!

As for Dan, he had "gone up like a rocket, to come down like a stick," as he told his sister Isabel.

But Philip knew nothing of this, nor did he for many a day.

Philip got an idea for a new book while he was walking with his mother on the sea-front, and he delighted his mother by talking it out with her—a thing he had never done before.

She, dear woman! was all admiration and sympathy, though Philip's outlined plot was not very clear to her.

Of course, it would be a fine book—quite Philip's best!

CHAPTER XLI

A TESTIMONIAL TO MISS LINKIN

MRS. WEBSTER and Miss Linkin had been much upset by Dan's going to the White House. Of course, it could have but one meaning. That "Canadian minx" had laid snares for him. They would certainly lose their Dan. Equally, of course, the marriage would be most unhappy.

"Why?" Isabel had asked when Aunt Lizzie had ventilated this opinion.

"Can the leopard mate with the lamb?" Miss Linkin had solemnly demanded, and Isabel had burst forth into amused and aggravating laughter.

"I don't see the connection," she had said.

But when Dan returned from his visit, he looked so utterly dejected, that his mother and aunt took heart at once. It was only Isabel who looked troubled and concerned.

As soon as an oppressive meal was ended, Isabel followed her brother to his studio.

"What is it, Dan?" she asked anxiously, when Dan had lit the gas fire, and drawn up two wicker chairs.

"Can't you guess, Isabel?" he groaned.

"I think so, dear, but is it inevitable?"

"Quite."

"Yet—one never knows—a woman sometimes says 'No' when she means 'Yes.' "

"But not a woman like Aimée Le Breton."

"I made too sure," said Dan miserably. "I went up like a rocket—and I have come down like a stick. Of course, she is miles too good for me. I knew that all along."

"Is there someone else?" asked Isabel.

"Oh, no," answered Dan. "She is not going to marry. Oh! she is just the sort of woman to remain a virgin—so pure—so beautiful. Our Blessed Lady must have had a look like hers. Oh, if you could have seen her!—her sweet compassion, her sublime dignity. She is not for me, or for any man. What a blind fool I was! And I gave her pain. I saw that she suffered to see me suffer. I ought to have known—yes, I certainly ought to have spared her. I had a sense of having committed sacrilege in offering myself to her. That was how I felt about it, how I shall always feel about it. There are women who are like angels, and to ask such to marry is a sacrilege. She—Miss Le Breton—is the kind of woman who becomes a nun, and I was too blind to see it, though I, of all people, ought to have known it, for I painted her very soul in my Madonna. But I do not regret having met her, though it has well-nigh broken my heart. I shall be a better man for having known such a beautiful, pure nature. For her sake I shall live purely, and strive for ideals. That she has done for me. So, sister mine, don't shed tears."

Isabel was crying.

But in the sitting-room Miss Linkin was triumphant.

"She has refused him!" she cried exultantly to her sister.

"What a deliverance!" ejaculated Mrs. Webster devoutly. "Give me my *nux vomica*, Lizzie; and do see that my hot-water bottle is hot to-night. Mary Ann does not boil the water. I am sure of it! Yes,

it is a deliverance! I think that Dan might wait till his poor mother is underground before wanting to marry. It won't be long, anyway."

"Creaking doors hang the longest, Maria," replied Miss Linkin. "You've been a poor creature ever since Isabel was born, and you are not gone yet!"

"That has nothing at all to do with it!" rejoined Mrs. Webster. "I'm nearing my three-score years and ten—the allotted time of man."

"You never were any good at arithmetic, Maria," retorted her sister, nodding and making the corkscrew curls dance. "You were fifty-four last birthday."

"That has nothing at all to do with it," again asserted Mrs. Webster. "Keep to the point, Lizzie. Dan might wait for a wife till his mother is gone. What does he want with a wife? He has a comfortable home—well looked after."

The last clause had the effect of putting Miss Linkin in a good humor. There were times—a great many times—when Mrs. Webster irritated her. Mrs. Webster had never been much of a housekeeper even in her days of health, while her sister had a born gift that way. She had a born gift, too, for industry. She was never a moment idle. At this particular moment she was putting fine darns into a damask table-cloth, which, under Mrs. Webster's *régime*, would have long since been consigned to the rag-bag.

"Yes, Maria," said Miss Linkin. "Dan's home may not be exactly luxurious, but it is well kept, and Dan is certainly getting on. He has earned quite a lot of money with his portraits, and has a lot of commissions."

"That is all very well, Lizzie," broke in Mrs.

Webster querulously, "but Dan's eyes may go wrong again."

"You always were a prophet of evil, Maria," snapped Miss Linkin, whom the last remark had irritated. "You never see the bright side of anything."

"What a wicked untruth!" rejoined Mrs. Webster. "Didn't I see the bright side of Dan's disappointment?"

"Oh, *that!*" replied her sister scornfully.

"And now I suppose we shall have Dan moping about the place making everybody miserable. I have no patience with that kind of thing. People ought to consume their own smoke. I am sure this horrible November weather gets into my joints most distressingly. If Dan had not gone in for Art, he might have had enough money by now for me to winter in the South of France. There is an awful draught from that window when the door is open, and Mary Ann leaves it open every time she comes in."

"It wants a new lock," said Miss Linkin. "Dan says I can have it seen to."

"I think, considering my health, it might have been seen to before," Mrs. Webster complained, "and my chair is just opposite the door."

"Well, why not have your chair moved to the other side?" inquired Miss Linkin, not unnaturally.

"I am used to this side of the fireplace," said Mrs. Webster. "People at my time of life don't like changes. I want to go to the South of France."

"You just said you didn't like changes," her sister reminded her.

"That has nothing at all to do with it," replied Mrs. Webster conclusively.

Miss Linkin sniffed.

Mrs. Webster glanced at the clock over the mantel-piece and remarked:

"Dan and Isabel have been away in that studio three-parts of an hour. I must say, my children are not much comfort to me! You would have thought that Dan would have tried to entertain me a little after being away enjoying himself; but no, he must needs go to that studio with Isabel. My company is not sufficiently entertaining, I suppose."

At that very moment Dan came in, followed by Isabel. He was making a valiant effort to appear cheerful.

"Oh, *please* close the door, Dan!" were Mrs. Webster's first words. Then as he was about to obey she added: "But never mind! I am just going to bed."

"But you don't usually go to bed so early," said Dan. "I hope you are not feeling less well?"

"I am never well," replied his mother.

"But not worse to-night, I hope?" said Dan, pulling up a chair near her.

"More tired—tired of waiting," she answered.

"Waiting? Do you mean for us?" asked Dan. "I am so sorry. If I had had an idea——"

"That is just it, Dan. Modern sons and daughters never seem to have an idea. When your Aunt Lizzie and I were girls, we were *devoted* to our parents."

Dan looked troubled.

Isabel spoke:

"Oh, don't talk like that, mother! No son could be more devoted than Dan!"

"That is your way of looking at it," said Mrs. Webster. "Dan has been with you nearly an hour, and he comes to sit with his mother just at bedtime."

Miss Linkin jerkily folded up her work, remarking something about "silly nonsense."

"Don't go to bed yet, mother," said Dan, ignoring her reproaches. "I want to tell you about my visit to Gissing. It will amuse you."

"I am past being amused," said Mrs. Webster. "When I die I should like to be buried where——"

"Oh, for the Lord's sake!" broke out Dan.

"Well, Dan!" said Mrs. Webster, "all I can say is, that you Catholics are shockingly profane."

"Dear mother, let us talk of something else," said Dan. "For instance, the drives you are going to have. I can afford them now, and you must go out and get the air."

"November air! Dulwich November air! How can you talk of it, Dan! This part of the village is full of damp and fog," Mrs. Webster complained ungraciously. "If I could be in the South of France——"

"I wonder if it could be managed?" said Dan. "We must go into figures. I don't see why you couldn't go."

"But I should have to take your Aunt Lizzie to look after me, and there would be no one to take care of the house. If Isabel had not been so obstinate about doing school work she might have attended to her mother."

"You are tired and ill, or you would not talk so, mother," Dan told her. "You know how pluckily Isabel went out to earn, because I made so little. But she need not now."

Isabel intervened.

"I shall not leave the James Allen, Dan, however much you get on. I like my independence too well to give it up. Moreover, Aunt Lizzie looks after

mother far better than I could. There is no reason why mother and Aunt Lizzie should not go to the South of France if you can manage it. Mary Ann can look after us well enough."

Mrs. Webster began to shed tears at this point.

"It is hard that my children should want to get rid of me, and banish me to a foreign land," she said in a faltering voice. "You both want to get me far away. Well, I suppose I am a trouble. The house would be a lot brighter without me. Let me go, and if my bones have to be laid in a foreign soil, I suppose it won't much matter, though I have picked the spot in Norwood Cemetery where I would desire to be laid."

"Maria! come to bed!"

Miss Linkin spoke with some severity.

Mrs. Webster rose, obedient to the voice of her sister, and walked with bent head towards the door.

"Your Aunt Lizzie is the only one who troubles much about me," she said, as she quitted the room without even a good-night to her children.

"Take care, Maria, how you walk. You are treading on the front of your dress," Miss Linkin said in a loud voice, as the sisters mounted the staircase.

Dan and Isabel exchanged despairing glances.

The scene which had just been enacted was not new to them. A little real ill-health, and a great deal of imaginary ill-health, had made Mrs. Webster a most unreasonable and aggravating woman. Yet both Isabel and Dan knew that she loved them both.

"It is poor Aunt Lizzie who has most to bear," said Isabel to her brother. "Both you and I get away from it all. But Aunt Lizzie has it night and day and every night and every day. Aunt Lizzie

ought to have no purgatory, she has had it here. I could never put up with it without a break as she does. I can't help admiring her. She never varies. Every day she goes through her self-imposed tasks. She has nothing whatever to brighten her drab life, and she never grumbles. I don't think any of us know quite what a heroine she has been through the years."

"Quite true," agreed Dan. "We can all be patient and heroic by fits and starts, but Aunt Lizzie keeps on being patient and heroic. She puts some of us to shame."

CHAPTER XLII

HOW REPUTATIONS ARE RUINED

MISS LE BRETON began to be a much-talked-of young woman in Hastings, and even Bexhill, on account of her wonderful horsemanship. She, with her uncle, had gone to the first meet of the Bexhill Harriers, and her portrait on her splendid mare Black Bess had got into the *Hastings and St. Leonards Pictorial Advertiser*. People began to leave cards at the White House, but disappointment awaited them—especially, perhaps, the men—for Mr. Alvin made it well understood that they wished to live a quiet and retired life, and the calls, with the exception of the Barrimores' and the Picketts', were not returned.

But no one had a word to say against Thomas Alvin, for he was found to be most liberal to local charities.

Alvin never gave anything, however, without consulting his niece. "The money is yours, not mine," he would say to her. But she would answer: "*Ours*, uncle."

In these days Alvin was happier than he had ever been in all his ill-starred life. But he often suffered acutely. There were days when he never emerged from the little wood where no one but himself ever entered. He could not forgive himself for the crime he had committed, though his victim had forgiven him.

He was now much troubled about Eweretta. She had refused Dan Webster's offer, and she had told

him in so many words that she no longer loved Philip. What was to become of her when he and Mrs. Le Breton were gone?

She would have money, certainly, but Alvin wanted for her to be a happy wife and mother. It was at her instigation that he had discouraged callers. How would she meet with a man she could marry if she insisted upon isolation?

He had noticed again and again—notably at that first meet of the Bexhill Harriers—how much admiration she had excited. But she was firm in her resolve.

“I am quite happy, uncle,” she would say.

She spoke the truth, for though she felt that her romance of love was over, and that Philip had resigned himself to the loss of the girl he had once so passionately loved, still, she had the joy of seeing Philip become more the old Philip of her love. He was conquering that hardness, that care for social advancement, which had so spoiled him. She had a curious feeling that she was indeed dead, and was watching Philip from another world. Perhaps she might help him. She had first found the pure joy that being a helper brings, in seeing Mrs. Le Breton become more cheerful under her influence. Mrs. Le Breton had had an utterly hopeless expression in the first months, but now she could even laugh.

Then Eweretta had helped Alvin. She was always on the look-out for him after one of his days shut up in the little wood.

He was sure of finding her at the gate that led from the wood to the garden, even though November mists lay thick about the bushes. She would slip her arm through the rough Colonial's and tell him she had missed him.

What this meant to the ill-starred Thirteenth Man he alone knew, nor did he himself realize to the full.

Eweretta was the first woman who had ever cared for him or seen any good in him. Sometimes he suffered a kind of agony of dumbness. He longed so much to make her understand how he worshipped her, and no words seemed worth anything. He would gladly have died to give her a happiness. All the love which had found no object during his whole life till he had known Eweretta concentrated now on the beautiful girl—the girl he had so wronged.

One day—it was after one of those retreats to the little wood—Alvin told Eweretta that his wrong to her had given him “hell.”

“Don’t let it do so any more, dear uncle,” she said. “So much good has come out of evil. But for that wrong I should not have had your love and poor Mrs. Le Breton’s. You would never have found out how much I love you, and Mrs. Le Breton would have pined away alone in the prairie.”

“But you lost your lover,” he reminded her.

She gave one of those mystical smiles which had moved Dan so much.

“I lost the Philip that was,” she said. “Had he married me, as he would have done had he not thought me dead, we might not have been happy. Philip had passion for me; it remained to be proved if that passion would ever become steady love.”

“But we know now that there was nothing at all between him and Miss Lane,” Alvin said. “You thought them lovers.”

“My instinct played me false there,” acknowledged Eweretta. “But you heard the sentiments expressed in the book.”

"You mean about the man deciding to marry a woman who would help him socially?"

"Yes," answered Eweretta. "The man in Philip's book placed a literary success before love."

"That book is burned," Alvin reminded her.

"Yes, and more was burned with it, I suspect," she replied enigmatically.

Eweretta's helpfulness was not confined to the White House. The old priest at "St. Mary, Star of the Sea," had only to let Miss Le Breton know of a sad case of poverty to find it relieved. She never appeared herself in such matters. She helped the poor through the old priest. Father Donelli thought Miss Le Breton a saint. She did not do her good works before men to get praise of them. She lived a simple, pious life. She accused herself in the Confessional of want of gratitude for a sorrow which had come to her—of course, for her good.

Eweretta had, indeed, struggled to thank God for the loss of her lover; she had at one time bitterly rebelled. She had so loved Philip! The rebellion was ended, but she had not come yet to be grateful to God for the sorrow, which she, simple soul that she was, felt that she ought to do. The poor little "saint" was very human!

One of Eweretta's greatest admirers was Minnie Pickett. She had persuaded Minnie to confess her love affair with the clerk from the gasworks, and not practise a deception on her parents.

Perhaps we never love anyone quite so really as the man or woman who leads us to abandon a fault or to rise to ideals.

Minnie loved Eweretta, because her influence was all towards the highest and best.

And Minnie had found that she had lost nothing

by being open and above board with her parents. After an inquiry into the character of Minnie's lover, Mr. Pickett had consented to the engagement, and the young man was allowed to pay stated visits to the farm.

Eweretta often went to Pickett's Farm, but never when Mrs. Hannington was there if she knew it. She disliked Mrs. Hannington exceedingly, for on the one occasion when she had met her, that lady had scandalized both Philip and Phyllis, and Eweretta had told her exactly what she thought of her, which had not been pleasant for Mrs. Hannington to listen to.

Mrs. Hannington had from that time added hatred of Miss Le Breton to her other iniquities, and far from curbing her love of tearing people's characters to pieces, had found a new victim in Miss Le Breton.

Colonel Lane had put an announcement of his daughter's going to join her husband in India in the *Hastings Observer* to stop the talk. It had been carefully worded and appeared like social news.

Of course Mrs. Hannington had her say on the subject (though not at Pickett's Farm). She confided to all her numerous acquaintances, with this one exception, that Colonel Lane was pretty artful, but that he couldn't deceive *her*. Of course, he had sent that notice to the paper to hoodwink Hastings folk. There was a *reason* for Miss Lane having to "clear out," and it was a pity she *hadn't* a husband. The only thing was to smuggle her out of the country and hide her shame. The Colonel was as bad as his daughter. Look how he stayed away from home! Then again, who was the woman he had foisted off on the unsuspecting Barrimores? A woman with two boys, too! No doubt the boys were

Colonel Lane's own! All men led double lives, only some of them didn't get found out. As for Mr. Philip Barrimore, it was to be hoped he would get his deserts for being the ruin of a young girl! And he was friendly with the White House people. What sort of people were they? coming from no one knew where! And why did they keep so much to themselves, if they had not some guilty secret? Miss Le Breton, with all her pretended virtue, had been shut up for *hours* with that young Mr. Webster—that she knew for a fact—and artists were always on *far* too intimate terms with their models. Miss Le Breton would be going off to India “to join her husband” *next!*

After this kind of tirade, Mrs. Hannington usually ended up by thanking God she was not as other women. Mr. Hannington had his own opinion upon this point, and he did not thank God that his wife was not as other women; indeed, he had been heard to express the wish that she could be like any woman he knew—except herself.

CHAPTER XLIII

A MIRACULOUS MEDICINE

THERE had been a military funeral at the cemetery at Ore. It was the band-sergeant of the Rifles, who had served in the local Artillery and Rifles for thirty-four years, and he was buried with full military honors. Colonel Lane had gone to the funeral, for he had known and liked Band-Sergeant Dean.

It was a bitterly cold day, and Colonel Lane was not well. His health had failed a good deal since his daughter had left him.

When the comrades of the band-sergeant fired a volley over the grave, Colonel Lane was seen to stagger, and but for the timely aid of a friendly hand would have fallen.

He was taken home unconscious.

Mrs. Ransom had sent at once to Hawk's Nest and to Dr. Nansel.

It was Mrs. Barrimore who first arrived with Mr. Burns.

Uncle Robert, who read his sister's eyes, insisted that she should remain.

"You will stay till he is well," announced Uncle Robert. "No one on earth is so good a nurse as you, and Mrs. Henderson will look after Hawk's Nest. It will do her good to have something to see to, so you need not worry in the least. The boys will keep *me* occupied."

Mrs. Ransom, for from being affronted by the proposal Mr. Burns made, was much relieved by it.

"The Colonel was 'a bit of a handful' when he was well, and goodness knows what he would be like ill," she said.

But Colonel Lane was not even "a bit of a handful," as it turned out. He was very ill indeed, and was as patient as very ill persons usually are.

Dr. Nansel insisted on a professional nurse, but said that Mrs. Barrimore might share the work with her. Dr. Nansel described the case as complicated. The heart was very weak. There had been at one time abscess of the liver, contracted in India. But nervous breakdown of a very serious character was the cause of the present mischief. The condition of the heart was such that death might ensue. Evidently the Colonel had held up till he literally dropped. Careful nursing and the enforced rest might bring him round, but Anglo-Indians slipped through the fingers in a most amazing way. They had nearly always some undeclared mischief, which asserted itself with direful results when illness from another cause overtook them. Anglo-Indians were "a bag of tricks." Still, of course there was hope.

What Annie Barrimore suffered in the days that followed only God knew.

Philip, for whom she had sacrificed this man's happiness and her own, was now quite in the background. The mother-love which had been so intensely strong in her gave place now to the passionate love she felt for the man who was apparently dying before her eyes.

Had she married him this would not have happened. She felt that she had murdered him she loved best. She knew now what she had not known before,

that her love for this man was greater than her love for her son. Yet, this was not really the case; the love was *different*, that was all.

Most days, when the trained nurse was in charge, Uncle Robert fetched his sister to take a few hours' rest in her home. He was not without fear that she would break down; but he felt he had chosen the lesser evil, for she would never have borne to be kept away from the beloved patient.

On one of these brief visits home she found Philip there, and Philip saw a side of her he had never suspected; in fact, that he would never have believed could exist in one so uniformly gentle.

Mrs. Barrimore was cross and irritable; when he offered the usual caress, she put him from her, asking to be let alone.

Philip was much hurt, but he recalled many occasions on which he had repulsed his mother, and he realized now what it must have meant to her.

Mrs. Barrimore was in her Gethsemane at this time, for Colonel Lane was too ill even to give her a sign that he knew she was near him. His consciousness was clouded, and he was often so still that she had thought he had passed away.

Uncle Robert had insisted on Sir Samuel Fergusson being called in, but he had apparently been mystified by the case, and had had the honesty to say so. He, however, had expressed the opinion that the Colonel might recover, and had insisted on constant nourishment. Fortunately the patient could swallow what was given to him, and did not resist the food, which, of course, took a liquid form.

Uncle Robert took a more hopeful view than anyone of the case. He declared that nature in Colonel Lane's case was insisting on absolute rest, even of the

mental faculties. He had heard the Colonel say that after a campaign he had once slept for four days and nights without waking, and had been perfectly well at the end of that time, all the weariness of war gone. Uncle Robert cited other cases he knew of, where loss of sleep had always to be made up. His own mother had, after a week of day-and-night nursing, spent most of a week in sleep.

Now the Colonel had been on a great strain for a long time. He had spent himself for his friend Henderson. He had been ceaselessly worrying about his daughter; also (and Uncle Robert put this first) he had been condemned to resign the one woman who could have made him happy. Was it any wonder that he should be in his present position?

Uncle Robert put all this to Philip after his mother had gone back to Colonel Lane.

"Uncle, I don't know how it is, but lately it has been brought home to me that I have been a thorn in the flesh to everyone."

Uncle Robert simply stared at his nephew.

"I wonder," went on Philip, "that any of you can stand me at any price. I was simply beastly about your book, and I was unutterably selfish about—about my mother and Colonel Lane. I put my great barge of a foot down, and prevented the happiness of those two. Now it is too late."

"I am not so sure of that," said Uncle Robert. "I have an idea that you have it in your power to administer the most potent medicine in Colonel Lane's case."

"Then, by heaven, I will do it!" cried Philip, understanding. "I'll go right off now and see my mother."

"There is no time like the present," Uncle Robert

affirmed. "I will get my hat and go with you as far as the door. A blow on the West Hill will do me good. I miss my swims at this time of the year."

When you get about half way down Salters Lane you come upon a quiet backwater of a road, in which are old substantial houses, with big, sloping gardens, where century-old trees are bird-haunted.

In one of these houses, near that end of the road which is nearest to St. Clement's Church, Colonel Lane lived. On the opposite side was The Hermitage, where some nuns who had been banished from France lived, whom Eweretta had found out—to their advantage.

At the small gate that led into the garden of Colonel Lane's house Uncle Robert left his nephew.

Philip climbed the narrow steps, and then the steep path, bordered still by gloriously-colored chrysanthemums, and knocked upon the old-fashioned door softly. He would not ring.

Mrs. Ransom opened the door.

"He is slightly better, sir," she whispered excitedly. "He smiled at your mother when she came in. It is the first notice he has taken of anybody."

"Is she with him now? Do you think I could see her for two minutes?" Philip asked.

"I can ask her, sir," answered Mrs. Ransom with some hesitation; "but she is not over-willing to leave him even to get necessary rest."

"It is very important," urged Philip, whereupon Mrs. Ransom asked the young man into the dining-room and went noiselessly upstairs.

"What is it, Philip?" asked Mrs. Barrimore, turning tired eyes on her son.

"Mother," began Philip tenderly, "I have thought of a new medicine for Colonel Lane."

"Everything has been tried, Philip. He seems slightly better."

"Not everything, mother," rejoined Philip. "The medicine I am thinking of will cure him."

She made a little gesture of impatience. But for Philip all this sorrow might have been spared, she was telling herself.

"Mother," said Philip, taking her slim hand within both his, and looking affectionately at her, "the medicine I mean is *yourself*."

She looked up with startled eyes. "Do you mean——" she began.

"I mean," said Philip firmly, "that you must tell him you will marry him when he gets well."

CHAPTER XLIV

HOW AN EDITION OF "WINGS AND WINDS" WAS SOLD

PHILIP returned to Hawk's Nest by runs and leaps, a thing so unusual with him—for Philip was naturally indolent—that when his uncle, who was instructing the gardener about some planting-out, saw his nephew exhibiting such energy, he thought for a moment that the boy had taken leave of his senses.

"Ah, Philip!" he exclaimed, "what says our friend Cicero: '*Potest exercitatio et temperantia etiam in senectute conservare aliquid pristini roboris*'—exercise and temperance can preserve something of our early youth even in old age. You are starting exercise at last! But what news are you bringing that you run?"

Philip was panting and struggling for breath.

At last he said: "You were quite right, uncle. I said my say and I went, and I had not reached the top of Salters Lane before I heard steps behind me—running. It was my mother. Heavens! but what a girl she looked! She told me that I had performed a miracle, and then fled back to the dear patient. Uncle, I am in for a stepfather! and one who is not always sweet-tempered! There will be great changes for you, too, uncle. I should think you had better take on Mrs. Ransom when mother goes."

"And what is to prevent Mrs. Henderson from

having the post?" inquired Uncle Robert, as he pushed a cake of mud off his boot with a stick. "She is keeping house now, and doing it well, though Lane did think she was not much of a manager. Poor soul! she seems twice as happy being occupied. Between you and me, Philip, Lane never did see further than his nose. Look how little Phyll hoodwinked him! And Mrs. Henderson had never a chance with a sick husband and two healthy, unruly boys—and a house where the very door-knobs were off, and no money to speak of—Philip, don't step on that bed! There are bulbs in it—Mrs. Henderson is a very intelligent woman. She admires 'Wings and Winds,' and can quote my verses. Speaking of those same verses, I heard from the publisher to-day that the whole edition was sold out. Think of that, my boy! The verses can't be so bad as you thought them!"

"I am tremendously pleased, uncle," said Philip, backing on to the bulbs again.

He was extremely puzzled all the same.

"Look here, Philip!" cried Uncle Robert, "you had better come in. You do nothing but trample down my beds, and the path is wide enough, I should think! Luncheon must be ready. Just notice how much brighter Mrs. Henderson is looking despite her dismal garb. She is not bad-looking either. Her grey hair becomes her."

"I must get back, uncle, thank you," said Philip. "I asked for Soda to be brought round by two o'clock."

"But you must eat your luncheon, man!"

But Philip was obdurate. He knew that Alvin and Miss Le Breton were in Hastings, and that they were riding. He knew, too, that they would be

returning about two o'clock, and he meant to join them as if by accident.

He knew nothing of Dan's ill-success with his Madonna, and firmly believed the two young people were now engaged; but he saw no reason why he should not pick up a few of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. He had got his own lonely life to lead, and now his work did not fill his life any longer. It did not satisfy the craving for love and sympathy. He found that the world he had created for himself was a very lonely world indeed; yet, so short a time ago, he had imagined it all-sufficient! The isolation of the bungalow had begun to be hard to endure. He felt it rather a grievance, too, that new people should be at Hawk's Nest. It was an invasion of his home. Home? it would never be home again, with his mother gone!—his mother whom he had never valued half enough. Truly his world seemed to have crumbled away about him!

If Eweretta had only lived! How different it all might have been! If only Dan had not been in the running!—but he must never think of that!

Miss Le Breton, so like to Eweretta, but more than Eweretta had ever been in some ways! Eweretta had never that sweet calm which made her half-sister so restful! How desirable she was!

How Philip wanted rest! From what? From himself!

Philip rode slowly in the direction of Gissing, so that he had only got as far as Ore church when he heard the welcome clatter of horses' hoofs behind, and drawing rein, waited for Miss Le Breton and Alvin to overtake him.

Philip uncovered as they came up.

"Hallo! Barrimore," called Alvin. "You were the man in my mind! There are animated pictures—all Canadian—to-night at the Public Hall at eight o'clock. We are all driving in to see them; and there is a spare place. Won't you come with us? You know a little of Canada, too. For *us*, it will be like *going home*."

There was a curious choke in the Colonial's voice which did not escape Philip.

"Yes, do come, Mr. Barrimore," said Miss Le Breton.

That decided Philip.

"I should much enjoy it," he said. "It is very kind of you to ask me to go with you."

"You had better come back with us and have dinner. We are going to dine at five o'clock and dispense with tea to-day. Neither of us has had much luncheon, so we shall have a good appetite, I hope. But you——"

"I have not lunched at all," Philip told them, "so I shall be able to do justice to dinner though it is early. I will come in about half-past four if I may."

"Come as early as you like," said Alvin.

The talk on the way was all of Canada, and Philip found himself wondering why Alvin had come to England, since he had apparently left his heart in Canada.

They walked their horses abreast unless the coming of a vehicle made it necessary to fall out of line, and it was Alvin who did most of the talking.

"This time of the year I should be hauling wheat into Broadview, as likely as not, if I were back in Canada," he said. "I came over at the end of November, the only other time I came to England.

I was 'Batching' with a young fellow then. Lord! how we worked to get all rounded up! We were loading all the Sunday, I remember. We took about five hundred bushels of wheat to Broadview, and put a new floor in the granary; got in and cut up the wood, lined up the shack, deepened and cribbed the wells all within the inside of a fortnight—and the temperature below zero!"

"I should think you feel yourself well out of all that," suggested Philip.

"No, it sounds queer, but I don't. I am always thinking what they are doing now out there. The true Canadian loves Canada as the Irish love Ireland. I don't mean the sort that get dumped down there from England—cheeky, uppish, lazy chaps that turn tail at a bit of work. I mean *Canadians*."

"But some Englishmen seem to get on in Canada," ventured Philip.

"The right sort do," acknowledged the Colonial, "but the right sort would get on anywhere."

They parted company at the bungalow, and Philip went over to the White House later.

He was taken into the drawing-room by Mattie, where he found himself alone.

His eyes wandered round the room and fell on an enormous unopened parcel addressed to Miss Le Breton.

On the big white label was the name of Uncle Robert's publisher.

Then Philip understood how a whole edition of "Wings and Winds" had been sold.

CHAPTER XLV

HOW A SCANDAL-MONGER WAS SERVED

To have voluntarily exiled oneself, and to find when one wishes to return that every door is closed against one, is not a pleasant experience!

Philip Barrimore realized that in leaving Hawk's Nest he had not only done it of his own free will, but against the wishes of all concerned. Now, though he could certainly go back and take possession of his old room if he would, yet the door of the old home was closed against him; or, to put the thing more plainly, the old home no longer existed. Mrs. Henderson and her boys were installed there. His mother would be going away. Hawk's Nest remained, but the home was practically gone.

In the story Philip had read aloud at the White House, he had ventilated views which had closed another door to him—the door of love. Dan—wise Dan!—had entered at that door—so Philip thought! The bungalow became a horror of loneliness.

Philip tried to work, but no ideas came. He would go out on Soda, coming home wearied, but not refreshed.

At night he invariably walked across the field and looked upon the White House.

Often he saw the light of Alvin's lantern going to the little wood. Always he saw the light through the blind of the window he had accidentally learned was Miss Le Breton's.

Another fact he had definitely learned—it had been on the drive home to Gissing, after the animated picture show at the Public Hall—was that he loved Eweretta's half-sister more passionately even than he had ever loved Eweretta. And she was also lost to him! He was stranded, a lonely man who was now starving for love and sympathy.

In his mother's happiness, which was indirectly of his making, he had no part. Colonel Lane had never really liked him. A good many people did not like him; but Alvin seemed to do so. For this reason Philip began to have an affection for the rough Colonial. Uncle Robert's affection he had done his best to kill. True, Uncle Robert was always kind to him, but when had Uncle Robert ever been anything but kind to any human being?

There was no comfort in going to Hawk's Nest now. Those two boys, Eric and Will, played tricks on him. Why were they not sent to Brighton College yet? They were not going till after Christmas. They turned Hawk's Nest into a pandemonium, and Uncle Robert seemed to like it! Two or three nights a week he took those boys to the Hippodrome.

The mother was home again. She was preparing for her wedding, and Colonel Lane was constantly there. Of course, Colonel Lane had got well as by a miracle!

But Dan? How was it Dan did not turn up at the White House? Philip dreaded his coming, but he resented his absence. If he had been in Dan's shoes he would have been again at the White House before now!

It was strange, too, that Dan was never mentioned by Alvin. Once or twice Philip had mentioned Dan to Alvin in hopes that he would say something about

the engagement. Philip wanted to know if Miss Le Breton was happy about it, but he could not ask a direct question.

At last a letter came from Dan. He wrote from Nice, where he said he had installed his mother and aunt for the winter. He said he had been seedy himself. But not one word of the Madonna! Could it be possible?—no, he dared not think of it! Yet, would not Dan speak of his happiness if Miss Le Breton had accepted him?

It was a dull November morning when Philip got Dan's letter. He could not rest, so he told Davis to get Soda out, deciding to ride in to Hastings.

As he was starting, Alvin rode up alone. He too was riding into Hastings, and hailed the chance of Philip's company.

"I heard from Dan Webster to-day," Philip said, as they rode side by side. He glanced at the Colonial furtively to see the effect of the announcement.

"Poor Webster!" muttered Alvin.

Philip's heart bounded. "*Poor Webster!*"—why did Alvin say *poor* Webster?

"He was pretty hard hit, poor devil!" went on Alvin. "I blundered too. I thought my niece cared for him."

Philip took off his cap and mopped his brow.

"Where does he write from?"

"He is in Nice, with his mother and aunt. He is seedy," answered Philip, "but he says he is returning at once to work."

"There is no understanding women," Alvin next said. "I think Aimée means to remain unmarried. I should like her to marry some good man. Mrs. Le Breton could live with them. I should make that a condition; and I should go back to Canada. I

thought I should like living a gentleman's life, as John did. But I don't. I would rather be in Canada and 'hire out.' "

"But surely with all your money you would not need to 'hire out'?" laughed Philip.

He was glad of an excuse to laugh out. He felt like shouting. It was all very well for Alvin to say his niece wanted to remain unmarried! She should not remain unmarried if Philip could help it!

"You see," said Alvin uneasily, "I have been used to hard work all my life, and I am like a fish out of water."

"But why *hire out*?" asked Philip. "Couldn't you buy a farm and work it?"

"Young man, there are things you do not understand," Alvin told him a little curtly.

Philip was silent.

Alvin himself was silent too for some time. His thoughts, awakened by Philip's natural question, brought his sin vividly before him. He buy a farm, indeed! was he not at this very moment living on Eweretta's charity? He could not bear it! He was still strong and hearty. There were years more work in him. If only he could see Eweretta happily married, he would then disappear.

If only Eweretta would let him confess his crime, and give her her own identity, then he felt sure Philip would claim her. He had that very morning had a painful interview with the girl on this subject. But she obstinately refused to give him permission to speak.

Alvin resolved to go to Father Donelli, tell him the whole story, and beg him to use his influence with Eweretta. She liked the old priest; moreover, he could, if he would, use compulsion.

Things could not go on as the were. The "Thirteenth Man" had, he felt, sold his soul to rid himself of his ill-luck. Surely Eweretta, as a good Catholic, would not wish him to remain with such a sin on his conscience if Father Donelli made her see it in its true light?

Very little conversation took place between the two men after this. Each was full of his own thoughts.

A diversion occurred as they came to Blacklands.

A big crowd was gathered at the corner by the church. In the centre of the crowd was a policeman holding by the arm a bedraggled and dripping woman, who was sobbing angrily, while the crowd jeered.

Alvin inquired of a man what was the matter.

"Old Tom Jones has ducked a woman in the sea for slandering his wife," said the man, "and the bobby is seeing her home. Serve her right, the old cat! she's always spreading scandals about people!"

"I know that woman by sight," Philip remarked to Alvin. "I have seen her at Pickett's farm; but not just lately."

"It must be that Mrs. Hannington," said Alvin. "Aimée went for her at the farm because she was scandalizing someone. The Picketts have thrown her over."

They rode on, parting at the gate of Hawk's Nest.

"Come in to-night, won't you?" called Alvin as he rode off.

"Thank you, I will," Philip called back.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE MYSTERY OF THE LITTLE WOOD REVEALED AT LAST

WAS it an accident that when Philip presented himself at the White House Miss Le Breton should be alone to receive him? If so, it was a pretty lucky accident, thought the young man.

Eweretta was sitting idly by the bright wood fire, her slim hands folded in her lap.

A strange tremor ran through Philip as she rose to meet him.

He knew that she must have felt his hand tremble when he took hers.

He began to babble strange words.

"Forgive me, Miss Le Breton!" he stammered. "I am not myself. Oh! you will scarcely think me sane when I tell you that for the moment I thought you were *Eweretta*."

"We are alike," she answered, becoming ashen pale.

"Yes, but so different—yet more than once I have seen Eweretta looking out of your eyes."

She turned her face away into shadow.

"But why should that move you, since you have forgotten her—or, at least, ceased to grieve for her?" she asked.

"Miss Le Breton, I tried to forget her. Can you blame me? I could not have lived if I had let myself so remember. I am a man few like and fewer

love. She loved me with all her soul. I lost her. But till I saw you I can say my heart remained in her grave. Oh, I must speak. I must say what is in my heart, even if it is to call upon me bitter disappointment. I am unfaithful at last to her dear memory, for I love you!"

He came close to her and took her hand. Her face was turned from him.

"I love you, Aimée, as I never loved Eweretta, though God knows I loved her well! Until to-day I thought I should never tell you this. Ah! I said I was unfaithful, but I think that was not true. You *are* Eweretta and yourself in one to me. It is as if my old love had risen from her grave, away in Qu'Appelle, and come to me, nobler, greater and more beautiful! If you can love me, then you can make of me something worthy. I have done many things just for your sake—tried to be better and conquer my faults. I have done this, though I thought you would never be anything to me. I have tried to act as you would approve, if you knew. And till to-day, I thought you belonged to another. Aimée! will you be my good angel? Will you be Eweretta to me?"

She turned shining eyes upon him, eyes brimming with tenderness as she said: "Yes, I will be Eweretta to you."

He caught her to him in a passionate embrace.

Neither of them heard Alvin enter. They thought only of themselves and the heaven into which they had entered, till a heavy sob broke the silence, and both turned to see Alvin with his face hidden by his hands.

"Uncle! dear uncle!" cried Eweretta, going to him swiftly.

"I am going to do it!" he exclaimed, "I am going to break my promise! Philip Barrimore, this is not *Aimée Le Breton*. It is your own *Eweretta*!"

Then he gasped for breath. Philip stared from one to the other in staggering bewilderment.

"It was my sin—my own great sin," went on Alvin.

Then, in a burst, he told the whole miserable story, finishing by saying: "Marry, my children—soon. I must wait to see that. Then I go back to the prairie."

His face looked different from what they had ever seen it—from what anyone had ever seen it. It was happy.

"I am no longer the ill-starred Thirteenth Man," he asserted. "I am been so fortunate as to see the lovers who were separated by my crime reunited, and the money of which I robbed an angel given back."

Eweretta flung her arms about her uncle's neck. She was no longer the calm Miss Le Breton. She was the old impulsive Eweretta, and was weeping unrestrainedly.

"Uncle, dear uncle, you must not leave us and go back to the old hard, lonely life. We want you, Philip and I, and no one must ever know this story. Strangers would not ever understand how you were hunted and driven always; how you never had a chance; how you thought yourself cursed from your birth, and that nothing seemed to matter. Strangers would not know that you had all the time a big, loving, starved heart, starved for love, that no one gave you, even your mother. But *I* love you, Uncle Thomas, I love you!"

The rough Colonial's face had upon it a light indescribable, as he said: "*I* unlucky! I, who have

found love! No, I am rich. I am fortunate! The prairie will be no more lonely. I shall live in this hour. But I must go—yes, I must go! the prairie calls, and calls.”

A wistful look came into Alvin's eyes, as if he were gazing on a far, far horizon.

“Ah, I am homesick! homesick!” he said in deep, lingering tones. “Homesick, for the old rough, wild life. How homesick you can neither of you know, even Eweretta, for she never roughed it. I must leave you now—leave you to realize your happiness. Before you go, Philip” (it was the first time that he had called the young man by his Christian name), “before you go, come to me in the little wood, and I will show you something. The gate will be open.”

Philip had not spoken one word. A war had been going on within him, a war of conflicting emotions. The affection which had of late been growing within him for Thomas Alvin was battling with anger and indignation at the crime of the man who had so nearly wrecked the happiness of himself and Eweretta.

“Philip,” said Eweretta, reading his thought, “we must be merciful if we are to expect mercy.”

“Dear heart!” he said, drawing her once more into his arms, “you are right. You are always right! But *why*, tell me why you did not disclose the secret to your old lover?”

Her eyes smiled.

“At first I thought you had ceased to love your Eweretta. I wanted to see if you would love her again in the person of Aimée Le Breton.”

“But how could I have been so blind as not to have known you under any disguise?” he cried.

“Yet it is so simple,” she told him. “You were

assured of my death. You even went to Canada to see my grave. You knew I had a sister so marvelously like me as to be easily mistaken for me. You were told I was Aimée Le Breton. Then again, sorrow robbed me of my old gaiety, changed my disposition. Oh, the delusion was easy enough to carry out!"

"It was carried out, in any case," he told her. "Yet there were moments when I saw the soul of my lost love looking out of your dear eyes. Oh, my darling! a miracle has happened! And can you love a vain, cantankerous brute like me?"

"I see deeper," she said simply. "The Philip I thought dead is alive again. We were *both* dead, dearest, and now we are alive."

It was then that Philip brought the little ring from his waistcoat pocket, and once more it was placed on Eweretta's finger.

It was late when the lovers passed out of the house through the mist and the dripping bushes to the gate which led into the little wood.

A strange sense of mystery seemed to enwrap them. They were to know at last what lay within the carefully-guarded enclosure.

A lantern stood upon a slab of stone at the open door which was fixed in the high brick wall.

They entered, and saw. Within the walled enclosure was a roughly-built "shack," or log cabin, in which a light was burning.

Alvin heard them and opened the door of the shack, inviting them to enter.

A lamp burned upon a roughly-constructed table in the one room, showing the meagre contents—a table, a chair and a bed. The bed was of rough boards nailed to the log-wall and, for a pillow, an old saddle did duty, aided by an old coat rolled up. A colored

blanket and a rug made of tawny wolf-skins, home-sewn, completed the bed-furniture.

Alvin offered the one chair to Eweretta, requesting Philip to sit upon the bed. He himself sat on a block of wood somewhat like a "butcher's block."

In the full light of the lamp the young people saw the Colonial—really saw him as he was. He was wearing a shirt of dark flannel, open at the neck. He was also wearing "jumpers."

"You see now, don't you," said Alvin, "that I am homesick? I made myself a hidden refuge. I built a shack and, shut in there, tried to think myself back in the North-West. There upon a nail hangs the gun that has been my companion for so many years."

He took it down and laid it across his knees, caressing it with his hands.

He talked on, and neither Eweretta nor Philip interrupted him.

"This gun has travelled many a mile slung behind the wagon, and I've brought down many a prairie chicken with it. You should see the prairie chickens feasting on the stooks! Ah, they are very good eating! I guess I'll be too late for the 'fall' ploughing. But I shall get a job, never fear. You won't keep me long waiting, will you? now you have seen—*this?* I can't go till I see you married, and you can see now how homesick I am!"

Philip was holding Eweretta's hand. She was silently weeping.

"I can't bear to think of your going back to that hard, lonely life, uncle," she exclaimed. "At least, take enough money for some land and stock. For love of me, take that! I see well enough that you can't be happy here, but do—oh, *do* let me help you to make life easy out there!"

"You may lend me the fare out, Eweretta," he answered. "I will repay it. Oh, I shall be able to repay it! I know that the 'Thirteenth Man' will have luck from now. The spell is broken. I shall miss the threshing. Ah, the threshing gets quickly done! Over a thousand bushels of wheat or upwards of two thousand bushels of oats in a day! Man! They go to sleep in this country!"

Alvin bared his brawny arm and looked at it. "This can work," he said. "Why, once I pulled a cow out alone that had got buried under two settings of straw. It had burrowed where the separator had stood, and the straw had slid off the top with the weight of the snow and buried the poor beast."

Thomas Alvin was, they saw, drunk with Canada this night. They saw that it would be cruelty to try to prevent his going back. They knew, moreover, that it would be useless to do so.

Eweretta came close to him and put her arms round his neck, her wet cheek against his.

"But you will come back and see us, uncle. You promise that?"

And he promised.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE LAST

“‘ALL’s well that ends well,’” quoted Mr. Burns from his easy chair. “So it’s a boy, and mother and son doing well, eh? And what does Philip say? Doing the proud father? Eh, what?”

Mrs. Lane, who had once been Annie Barrimore, had just come to Hawk’s Nest from the White House, where a son had come for Eweretta and Philip.

It was again nearing the end of November, just a year since the events of the last chapter.

“Oh, there is great rejoicing, I assure you!” cried Mrs. Lane. “I came in to tell you before going home. And my dear Ted has such good news too! Phyllis is most happy with her husband, and according to Arbuthnot, is an altogether model wife! And I have yet another piece of news for you. To-day is a day of good news, I think. That dear old Thomas Alvin has ‘struck oil,’ he says in a letter. I don’t know how exactly, but he has made money, and says he is coming over this ‘fall’ to spend Christmas at the White House. I never shall understand how they all kept the secret of Eweretta’s identity, or why Eweretta chose to personate her dead sister. I told her that her romantic idea of winning her lover for the second time in the person of Aimée, might have cost the poor fellow his life. But they are very happy, and, as you say, ‘All’s well that ends well.’ You know, don’t you, that Philip’s new book is out?”

Eweretta says it will make her husband famous. And Philip says, 'Not so famous as Dan's "Madonna" has made him.'"

"Dan! Ah, you don't know the news about Dan!" broke in Uncle Robert. "I got that to-day. He is going to marry a charming woman—the daughter of a big painter—I forget his name."

Uncle Robert fumbled in his pocket to find the letter, but failed.

"Anyway, the father of the girl is a big painter, and the girl has a pile of money, though Dan does not need it now. Mrs. Webster and Miss Linkin are going to take up their permanent abode at Nice, for Isabel—nice girl, Isabel—is going to marry one of the masters at Dulwich College."

"Oh, I am so glad!" said Mrs. Lane. "Really everything seems to be happening like a fairy-tale. But I must hurry away to tell my news to Ted."

Uncle Robert smiled to himself when his sister had gone. He smiled so much that Mrs. Henderson, who came in, was quite curious to know what was amusing him so, and asked him the question.

"It's a poor heart that never rejoices," said Uncle Robert. "By the way, those boys will soon be home for their holidays. Sit down a minute—I am sure you have time, though you do seem always to have your hands full. I want to talk about the boys. We can only be young once, you know, though you seem to be picking up a second youth from somewhere—but that is not the point. I want to make those boys very happy these holidays. They have done extremely well at school, and they have done us credit. I want to give them something they greatly wish for—a Christmas present, you know, and I want to talk to you about it. You are a nervous little woman,

you know, and you might find it alarming—the present, I mean—considering what daring young rascals those boys are, and I want to assure you that I shall take every necessary precaution to ensure their safety. I shall get their word that they will run no risks, and those boys understand honor, and their word will be quite sufficient. Also, I shall get a reliable man to accompany them. Now don't you want to know what the present is?"

Mrs. Henderson's eyes filled. She was, as she constantly was, overcome by this man's goodness and generosity.

"I can't find words," she said. "You have been so good—so very good to us all, I——"

"Tut! tut!" said Uncle Robert. "I amuse myself in my own way. That is all. But the present? Well, I am going to buy a couple of pretty ponies and have a man from Russell's to teach Will and Eric to ride. It will be good for them too, for they are to be soldiers. Independently of that, it is good for boys to learn to ride. I used to be fond of it, but I am too stout now. Thank goodness, I can still swim. I did enjoy the swims with those boys in the summer! Plucky little beggars they are!"

"They will be in the seventh heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Henderson. "They have always wished so much to ride."

Uncle Robert beamed.

"I do hope those boys will grow up to be a comfort to you," said Mrs. Henderson fervently. "You have done so much for us all, and there is nothing we can give you in return."

"What should I have done without you?" cried Uncle Robert. "There Annie goes off and marries her Colonel. Philip forsakes the Nest—Hawk's Nest,

I should have been left stranded with no one to look after me but you! And you keep the home for me as comfortable as Annie did, which is saying a good deal, for there are few women so capable as Annie."

"But that is so little!" said Mrs. Henderson.

"Then there is something greater you can do—if you will," he told her.

"What is it?" she asked eagerly.

"Be my wife!"

THE END

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